

WHO ARE THE DEMONS? THE ICONOGRAPHY OF INCANTATION BOWLS

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Ancient man lived amongst a host of frightening, negative, demonic forces which he attempted to control or coerce in order to ensure a harmonious and benevolent world-order. A vast array of magico-religious mechanisms evolved to cope with this problem including incantation bowls which were produced in vast quantities in Mesopotamia during Late Antiquity. Their texts have a miscellaneous heritage, being essentially an amalgam of various components including «Biblical imagery, popular Jewish beliefs, remnants of Mesopotamian religions and echoes of Hellenistic esoteric traditions»¹. This complex situation arose from magico-religious traditions being simultaneously conservative and syncretistic, absorbing as it were the «best of all worlds» in order to ensure efficacy against the demonic hosts.

All incantation bowls, whether written in Aramaic, Syriac or Mandaic, expressly aimed to bind and fetter demons², whose appellations were repeatedly cited throughout the texts in concatenations or strings as can be seen in this listing from an Aramaic incantation bowl, now housed in the Iraq Museum (I.M. 49972):

*wħršy wm'bdy wptkry dykry w'ystr' nyqbt' w'wt' wħwmry
zydnt' wnydry wšb'tt' wlwt' wmšqwpyt' w'slmt' w'nqt'
whfyt' wkwsy wmllyt' wškyt' dkl byt knyšt' bmhystl byty
wmn klhyn wkl ptkry dymqbln nydry wkl 'ystr' dymqbln
nydry b'lhy*

«sorcerers, magical works, male image-spirits, female goddesses, the false deity, impious amulet-spirits, vows, the oath, the curse, the affliction, the spell, necklace-charms, the sin, bowls, the word, *wškyt'* of every synagogue, *bmhystl* houses and from all these things. Also from all image spirits which receive vows and all goddesses which receive vows».

¹ L. Van Rompay, *Some Remarks on the Language of Syriac Incantation Texts*, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 236, 1990, 369.

² L. Schiffman and M.D. Swartz, *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Genizah*, Sheffield 1992, 27 mention the dominant passive performatives: «bound and sealed» (*'asir ve-ħatim*), «overturned» (*ħafikhah*).

Some of the terms are general, embracing wide categories *viz*: *dywyn* «devils», *šydyn* «demons» and *rwhyn* «spirits». More specific are the *hwmryn* «amulet-spirits»³ *ʿykwryn* «temple-spirits» and *ptkryn* «idol-spirits». Other demons, such as the *ʾstrt* «goddesses» and *lylyt* «liliths» are notable for their counterparts in the Babylonian pantheon from which they ultimately descended⁴.

As well as being the subject of texts, demons are portrayed on incantation bowls, usually as single anthropomorphic figures that are drawn in the interior centre of the vessels. In Mandaic specimens the drawings may also be found on the interior or exterior walls. As the citation of the demons' epithets rendered their forces impotent, safeguarding the people for whom incantation bowls were written, so the portraits of their images may have also reduced their efficacy, rendering them subject to the demands of the incantation text. The figure-drawings may have functioned as simulacra, a rôle which James Montgomery already suggested in 1913⁵. The image portrayed may have been general and comprehensive, representing all demons cited in the incantation text. Alternatively, it may have been particular, depicting certain demons that were both familiar and feared who, like the gods of yesteryear, had assumed the full range of human characteristics, both physical and behavioural.

This paper concentrates on the «rude figures ... which can hardly be said to adorn the bowls»⁶. It commences by asking, «What iconography characterises the drawings?», isolating those attributes or features which transcend the boundaries of script and are found in both Aramaic and Mandaic specimens. Recourse is then made to «duplicate» incantation bowls to ascertain whether any correlation exists between text and illustration, i.e. whether specific texts are accompanied by particular figure drawings. In its final part, the paper harks back to the Mesopotamian heritage of the incantation texts in divulging that the anthropomorphic images with their distinctive regalia were Ištar-Lilith, categories of female demons who were still remembered and feared in Late Antiquity.

*Defining the iconography of incantation bowls*⁷

A survey of the figure drawings indicates traditions broadly corresponding to script. Aramaic bowls favour a figurative, realistic style, whereas the Mandaic specimens are generally executed in a more impressionistic fashion. In Aramaic incantation

³ S. Niditch, *Incantation Texts and Formulaic Language*, OrNS 48, 1979, 461 sqq. for a new definition of this term.

⁴ W. Fauth, *Lilith und Astarte in aramäischen, mandäischen und syrischen Zaubertexten*, WO 17, 1986, 6-94 for further details.

⁵ J.A. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, Philadelphia 1913, 53.

⁶ *Idem*.

⁷ For discussion of the iconography of incantation bowls, see J.B. Segal, with a contribution by Erica C.D. Hunter, *Catalogue of Aramaic and Mandaic Incantation Bowls in the British Museum*, London, British Museum Publications (in press).

bowls a single anthropomorphic figure is rendered full-frontal, although occasionally profiles are shown⁸. In Mandaic incantation bowls two figures are sometimes drawn⁹. Amidst this disparity, certain features are constant. The figures have out-stretched arms with fingers clearly drawn. They stand splayed with out-turned feet and have dishevelled hair, of varying lengths, which is rendered by a series of strokes¹⁰. The figures wear, in the Aramaic incantation bowls, denticulated head-dresses, which have been styled as head-bands in the Mandaic bowls¹¹. The demons are frequently fettered at the ankles¹², a double shackle on the left leg connected to the left breast being favoured in the Mandaic tradition¹³. In some of the Aramaic specimens, the figures have wings and talons or pincer feet, traits that do not occur in the Mandaic incantation bowls¹⁴.

The iconography of the figure drawings divides into primary and secondary elements. The former are fundamental and can be termed «supra-cultural» since they appear in both Aramaic and Mandaic incantation bowls. The secondary elements interpret the primary elements within the context of the community in which the incantation bowls circulated and in doing so, may be termed «intra-cultural». This dichotomy can be illustrated as follows. Incantation bowls often show demons bound and fettered, this fundamental element in the iconography reflecting a major textual theme. The different types of fetters which are depicted in the Aramaic and Mandaic incantation bowls may be classified as secondary elements, perhaps reflecting items in use amongst the communities. Similarly, the denticulated head-dresses and the head-bands (often segmented or scalloped) which are sported by figures in the Aramaic and Mandaic incantation bowls respectively may represent artistic convention.

The visual perceptions of the communities within which the incantation texts circulated are encapsulated by the figure drawings but, as incantation texts are marked by their flexibility and variation, so these are not executed according to rigid conventions. Instead the medium is fluid, with each scribe offering his/her individual interpretation, a process that is exemplified by five «duplicate» Aramaic incantation

8 B.M. (British Museum) 117824 and B.M. 139524.

9 B.M. 91781 and B.M.127398.

10 For a résumé of the iconography of demons, see P.O. Harper *et al.*, *A Seal-Amulet of the Sasanian Era: Imagery and Typology, the Inscription, and Technical Comments*, *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, N.S. 6, 1992, 45.

11 B.M. 91714, B.M. 91728, B.M. 91736, B.M. 91773, B.M. 91781, B.M. 103359, B.M. 108822, B.M. 117826, B.M. 127398 and B.M. 139524.

12 B.M. 91770, B.M. 117826 and B.M. 136204.

13 B.M. 91714, B.M. 91728 and B.M. 91736.

14 I.M. (Iraq Museum) 55672 shows a figure, with a human face and body, but winged with taloned feet.

bowls which have come, in differing circumstances, from Nippur¹⁵. They were written for a variety of clients, but the core texts only exhibit minimal variants¹⁶. That the incantation bowls were the product of the same scribe is confirmed by their typology and palaeography, as well as by the distinctive figure which has been drawn within a circle at the interior centre of the hemispherical vessels. A bust, described as that of a woman, whose hands are folded, possibly in prayer, wears a denticulated head-dress¹⁷. Only the detail, such as the number of scallops of the head-dress, differentiates the drawings making it clear that the scribe has coupled text and portrait.

That the association between text, its arrangement and the figure-drawings was not fixed but was determined by the scribes can be investigated *via* another set of twelve «duplicate» texts, all of which belong to a well-known genre that is exclusive to Mandaic. Three of the incantation bowls, B.M. 91714, B.M. 91728 and B.M. 91736 are now housed in the British Museum. Six other texts coming from Khouabir were published by Henri Pognon, *Inscriptions Mandaites des Coupes de Khouabir*, Paris 1898 (Pognon Texts 15 - 20). To this collection may be added Harvard Semitic Museum 1931.1.1; Text II in M. Lidzbarski, *Ephemeris für Semitische Epigraphik*, 2 vols, Gießen 1902, vol. 1, pp. 89-106 and finally a bowl in the Iraq Museum, I.M. 60494¹⁸. In four of the specimens, the text has the tripartite arrangement that is characteristic of Mandaic, the remaining eight being written in concentric spirals of text¹⁹. Figure drawings also appear in five of the incantation bowls; three being placed at the end of the tripartite arrangement of text and two being associated with concentric spirals²⁰.

¹⁵ See Erica C.D. Hunter, *Combat and Conflict: Studies on Two Aramaic Specimens from Nippur*, in M.J. Geller - J.C. Greenfield - M.P. Weitzman (eds.), *Studia Aramaica: New Sources and New Approaches*, Oxford 1995, 62-66 for a detailed discussion of these specimens.

¹⁶ J. Naveh - S. Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity*, 2nd edition, Jerusalem 1987, 188-97 for the translation and commentary on Bowl 12a [Heb. 4 6079 - Hebrew National University Library, Jerusalem].

¹⁷ C. Müller-Kessler, *Eine aramaische Zauberschale im Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte zu Berlin*, OrNS 63, 1994, 5. Plates I - III accompanying Müller-Kessler's article show three of the illustrated bowls.

¹⁸ H.S.M. (Harvard Semitic Museum) 1931.1.1 was published by C.H. Gordon, *Aramaic and Mandaic Magical Bowls*, ArOr 9, 1937, 95-100 and has been republished by E. Yamauchi, *Mandaic Incantation Texts*, New Haven 1967, Text 26. Yamauchi, *op. cit.*, has also republished Pognon Texts 15, 16 and 18 respectively as Texts 7-9 as well as Lidzbarski's Text II which is numbered Text 19. I.M. 60494 has not been previously published. Its transcription and translation appear as Appendix A at the end of this article.

¹⁹ B.M. 91714, B.M. 91728 and B.M. 91736, Pognon Text 16 (tripartite arrangement), Pognon Texts 15, 17, 18, 19, 20; Lidzbarski Text II; H.S.M 1931.1.1 and I.M. 60494 (concentric spirals).

²⁰ B.M. 91714, B.M. 91728, B.M. 91736 (tripartite arrangement) Pognon Texts 15 and H.S.M. 931.1.1 (concentric spirals).

The impressionistic, highly stylised figures which are featured in B.M. 91714, B.M. 91728, B.M. 91736, Pognon Text 15 and H.S.M. 1931.1.1 can be accommodated within the iconographic conventions that have been previously outlined²¹. All have raised arms, with the open palms and fingers being clearly demarcated. They stand splayed, with the feet out-turned and fetters attached to the left leg. The figures have flowing tresses and wear a type of cap, that appears to be segmented. Within this overall stylistic conformity there is much variation in detail:

Fetters: In H.S.M. 1931.1.1 the figure is not shackled. B.M. 91714 and B.M. 91728 show a three-part fetter linking the left nipple to the left ankle, whilst a double fetter is shown in B.M. 91736 and Pognon Text 15. In B.M. 91736 there is no connection with the fetter despite the breasts being defined.

Hair: The figures of B.M. 91728 and H.S.M. 1931.1.1 have no hair. By contrast B.M. 91736 has six wavy tresses sprouting from the crown of the head, while in B.M. 91714 four wavy strands emerge from the side. Pognon Text 15 minimises the hair to two straight strands.

Head-dress: B.M. 91728 has a head-dress that is simply defined by two parallel lines. H.S.M. 1931.1.1 has a segmented head-dress similar to those featured in B.M. 91714, B.M. 91736 and Pognon Text 15.

Facial and body features: In B.M. 91714, B.M. 91736 and Pognon Text 15 the figures have no mouths. B.M. 91714 shows protrusions from the side of the head that could be interpreted as either ears or horns. No breasts are indicated for the figure of B.M. 91714, which like H.S.M. 1931.1.1 may be clothed. B.M. 91714 has three protrusions, possibly genitalia or tails, hanging from the lower part of the torso.

Apparel: H.S.M. 1931.1.1 wears a spotted tunic (?) with long sleeves as well as spotted leggings. The figure of B.M. 91714 might be clothed, but in B.M. 91728, B.M. 91736 and Pognon Text 15 appears naked.

The iconographic differences that have arisen between the figures, like the variants in the incantation texts, may be attributed to scribal interpretation, portraying the demons in an individualistic light! Yet representing a particular genre.

Recalling the Mesopotamian matrix

The images on the incantation bowls would have been familiar and well-known, but occasionally are accompanied by a caption. *q'! q'!* «Hark, my voice» is inscribed on the exterior wall of B.M. 91714. The connection between caption and

²¹ See PLATES I - V for photographs or line reproductions of the figure drawings in these incantation bowls.

figure drawing is made explicit in another incantation bowl that can be added to the aforementioned list of «duplicates». B.M. 135438, written in Mandaic, in concentric spirals, commences midway (l.17) with the typical formula *q' l q' l'*. On the vessel's exterior wall is a drawing that is defined by its iconographic attributes²²: upraised arms with fingers clearly defined, flowing tresses of wavy hair, as well as what appears to be a segmented head-band. The right foot has the expected outward-turned position, but its left leg does not appear to be shackled. A cross at the neck may indicate some type of fetter. Patterned markings on its legs suggest leggings, and the figure wears curious apparel: a bodice with 6 spots connected by thin strips to a skirt with 9 spots. Written in a shield at its right-side is the caption, *h'zyn dmwt' dq' l q' l' šwmy'* ... «This is the portrait of 'Hark. A Voice'. Hear and».

The opening stanzas of the «duplicate» incantation texts evocatively describe the «Voice», in its various manifestations:

*q' q' l' dš'm'n' wq' l h' lšy' dmyt' bry' wm' gwby' dn' syn
wn' hty n bqr' b' wq' l 'nšy' z' dny' t' dl' t' wmykdš' n
wm' yk' šypyn wm' kyb' n bh' zyn pgr'*

«This is the Voice.

The Voice of the weak that are broken and of men who fight and go into battle. Also, the Voice of raging women who curse, afflict, bewitch and pain this body ...».

The «Voice of raging women who curse ... » is not that of mere mortals, the «human agents» as Edwin Yamauchi suggests, but the IŠtar-Lilith demons, a connection which is explicit in Pognon Texts 13 and 14²³:

hw' šgš' b' ny' 'styr' t' wlyly' t' ql' yhy n d' nšy' z' dny' t'

«There has been a commotion among the Istars and the liliths!
Voices of raging women».

A highly stylised figure-drawing accompanying Pognon Text 14 exhibits the standard iconographic attributes: upraised arms, with palms and fingers defined, out-turned feet, strands of hair from the crown and possibly a head-band. Like H.M.S. 1931.1.1, the figure is not fettered.

Commenting on H.M.S. 1931.1.1, Cyrus Gordon noted that on the exterior was «a crude representation of the magician with uplifted arms to scare away the demons»²⁴. Rather, the anthropomorphic attributes suggest a demon - whose identity is spelt out

²² See PLATE VI.

²³ E. Yamauchi, *op. cit.*, 22.

²⁴ C. H. Gordon, *ArOr* 9, 1937, 98.

by the caption which has been written at the feet of the figure's shackled legs in Pognon Text 15. *hu' l'byt* was read by Pognon and later by Kurt Rudolph as a corruption of *lby't* the Mandaic expression for «la planète Venus»²⁵. On the other hand, Yamauchi has tentatively translated the phrase as, «this is for the house (?)», although he also juxtaposes the reading «[or for Venus (?)]»²⁶, suggesting the burial-spot of the incantation bowl. Since incantation bowls were exclusively used in domestic circumstances, the prescription, «this is for the house (?)» determining the place of burial is, at best, enigmatic²⁷. If Yamauchi's reading can be accepted, *hu' l'byt* may be formulaic, like the introductory sequence *lh'zyn byth dwrh hyklh wbnyn'nh* «for the house, dwelling, homestead and building» which frequently commences Mandaic incantation texts²⁸.

The caption *qb'b' dn'ws'* «at the gate of the temple», accompanying the figure drawing in H.M.S. 1931.1.1 and which has also been written on the exterior of I.M. 60494, adds further comment²⁹. Rather than being the place where the bowl was deposited as Gordon posits³⁰, several Mandaic texts from Khouabir stipulate that a similar phrase, *qb'b' d'kwr'* «at the gate of the temple» was the place where those incantations, which were to be repulsed, were written³¹. The same texts continue, citing their authority in the «name of Adonai Snubit, in the name of Ištar, the queen», and in doing so highlight the royal status of the demons, where «Ištar, the queen» can be equated with Ruha-Ištra, the queen of darkness in Mandaean mythology³². Rather than being the deposit-spot as Yamauchi proposes, Pognon's interpretation of *hu'*

25 H. Pognon, *op. cit.*, 43.; K. Rudolph, *Gnosis* (transl. R. Wilson), Edinburgh 1983, 345. See PLATE IV for the line drawing of this figure.

26 E. Yamauchi, *op. cit.*, 173.

27 For a chart of the burial of Aramaic and Mandaic incantation bowls in a courtyard at Nippur, see Erica C.D. Hunter, *op. cit.*, 606. F. Franco, *Five Aramaic Incantation Bowls from Tell Baruda (Choche)*, *Mesopotamia* 13-14, 1978-79, 233 notes that the specimens were «found behind the southwestern threshold of a room belonging to the excavated buildings» and «behind the northwestern threshold of the same room». R. Venco-Ricciardi, *Trial Trench at Tell Baruda, Mesopotamia* 8-9, 1973-74, 19 details the excavation of area 21 where four incantation bowls were found under «the new thresholds», suggesting that incantation bowls continue a heritage which harks back to the protective rituals of the Neo-Assyrian and Babylonian periods when apotropaic figurines were buried at various points in both private and public buildings.

28 Erica C.D. Hunter, *Two Mandaic Incantation Bowls from Nippur*, BaM 25, 1994, 611 for discussion of this phrase. Occasionally incantation texts mention parts of the house, see J. Naveh - S. Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity*, Jerusalem 1993, 138 [Bowl 25, l. 11].

29 C.H. Gordon, *loc. cit.* See PLATES VI and VII for the phrase on the exterior of H.M.S. 1931.1.1 and I.M. 60494.

30 C.H. Gordon, *op. cit.*, 100.

31 H. Pognon, *op. cit.*, Texts 13 and 14; also E. Yamauchi, *op. cit.*, Texts 5 (1.19) and 6 (1.18).

32 *Idem.*

l'byt as «Venus» exposes the identity of the figure-drawings – as the Ištar-Lilith genres of demons to which incantation texts and amulets made frequent recourse³³.

Conclusion

Venus was, of course, the Hellenistic counterpart to the astral connotations of the Mesopotamian goddess Astarte, the Ištar of Akkadian whose title had, by Late Antiquity, degenerated into a generic term. Yet the drawings on the incantation bowls depicting the erstwhile «goddesses» recall through their iconography their origins within the Mesopotamian matrix. These attributes, coupled with the distinctive spotted apparel sported in H.S.M 1931.1.1 and B.M. 135438, are echoed by an Akkadian incantation text which was written against the Labartu who, like the *lilitu* had the same vile reputation as the slayers of infants and whose identities eventually synthesized: «she is furious, she is impetuous, she is divine, she is terrible and she is like a leopard, the daughter of Anu ... her hair is in disorder, her breasts are uncovered»³⁴.

Discussing incantation texts, Montgomery states, «the religion of yesterday becomes the superstition of today»³⁵. He brilliantly portrays the situation where the decaying pantheistic world-order had been largely superseded by dualistic or monotheistic faiths. Many deities had become depopularised and to quote Baudelaire were «betrayed by fate, deprived of praise»³⁶. But their reputation lingered, their legacy continuing, in the form of the malevolent forces which were still greatly feared. Thus Ištar was still called in Mandaic texts, ‘*sytr’ ml’kt*’ «Ištar the queen», echoing her erstwhile status in Assyro-Babylonian cultus³⁷. Her image as the Queen of the «goddesses», complete with her crown, portrays the visual perceptions of the magico-religious traditions of the communities in Sasanid Mesopotamia in which incantation bowls circulated. And simultaneously illuminates their integral connection with the blueprint of ancient Mesopotamia.

³³ Cf. the terminology in Syriac amulets from Iran which have been dated to the seventh century A.D. in P. Gignoux, *Incantations magiques syriaques*, Louvain 1987.

³⁴ F. Thureau-Dangin, *Rituel et amulettes contre Labartu*, RA 18, 1921, 170.

³⁵ J. Montgomery, *op. cit.*, 70.

³⁶ *Baudelaire, Selected Poems*. Trans. Joanna Richardson, Harmondsworth 1975, Quotation from *Les Fleurs du Mal*.

³⁷ H. Pognon, *op. cit.*, Texts 13 and 14. Cf. E. Yamauchi, *op. cit.*, Texts 5 and 6.

Appendix

I.M. 60494³⁸Extract from the Iraq Museum register: (Registered 11.x.1957)³⁹

«Incantation bowl, hemispheroid, inside covered with Aramaic (?) inscription in concentric circles. Further little inscription on outside. d 175 [mm] h 35 [mm] No. other register, P.O. 688. Said to come from Tell Assafa near Yousifiyah intake».

Physical Description:

FORM: A complete (unbroken) hemispherical bowl, 17.3 x 4.8 cm, with a simple rim. Profile width at rim: 0.7 cm, centre base: 1.2 cm.

FABRIC: Very pale brown (MUNSELL 10YR 7/4) clay, with part of the exterior red (MUNSELL 2.5 YR 5/6). Medium-coarse texture with a dense and evenly distributed black grit inclusion and also a common and evenly distributed mica inclusion. No slip or glaze.

MANUFACTURE: Wheel thrown, with paring marks covering 9.0 cm diameter of the exterior base. The hand-finishing appears to have been executed with a blunt instrument, possibly a shell.

Decoration: Single hand-drawn line enclosing the text which has been drawn on the external wall.

Palæography: Mandaic.

Arrangement of Text: 23 lines written in a spiral pattern, commencing at the centre and ending at the rim edge of the vessel. 3 words are on the exterior surface.

Transliteration and Translation:Sigla:

°	uncertain reading
[n]	restored letters
{ n }	scribal plusses
< n >	scribal omissions

(1) [k]rykʾ wdʾhyʾ lwʾttʾ

(2) mn mʾhʾyʾzʾwd gwšn[ʾ]šp br

³⁸ See PLATE VII.

³⁹ The author examined this bowl at the Iraq Museum, Baghdad in September, 1994. She thanks Dr. Muʾayyid Saʾid Damerji, Director-General of the Dept. of Antiquities and Heritage, Republic of Iraq for his generous assistance in permitting its publication.

- (3) *m'k's q' q'l' dš'm'n'*
- (4) *wq'l h'lšy' dmyt'bry' wm' gwby' dn'syn wn'htyn bqr'b' wq'l*
- (5) *'nšy' z'dny't' dl't' wmykdš'n wm'yk'sypyn wm'kyb'n*
- (6) *bh'zyn pgr' dm'h'y'z'wd gwšn'sp wnhyt 'ly'yhyn*
- (7) *'zd'y wy'zrwn wy'qrwn wpr'yl wrp'yl wsh't'yl shyftynyn*
- (8) *nsybynyn b'dqy' dm'nzy'hyn dnyš'yhyn wbqw<r>qly'
dmwh'yyn wtb'r*
- (9) *q'm'yyn dr'm' wm's'rzynyn b'dqy' dm'nzy'yhyn dnyš'yhyn
{wqb}*
- (10) *wbqwrqly' dmwh'yn w'm'rly' {kwr} krwk dl'<t>ty'
lm'h'y'z'wd gwšn'sp w'mr' lh mn*
- (11) *kyb' dl'b'n l'tnyn wmn mr'r' dhynk'n gz'rnyn wl'tnyn w'm'm'
ly' 'šbyt 'l'ykyn wmwmy'n'lkyn*
- (12) *bšwm 'zd'y dyw' wy'zrwn dyw' wy'q'rwn wpr'yl rb' wrwp'yl
wsh't'yl dtyšry' wtyšbwq'l'*
- (13) *lm'h'y'z'wd gwšn'sp mn kwl lw't' w'qry't' kwlhyn dl'ttyn
lw'tyn wmn dmn 'b' w'm' dl'wty'*
- (14) *wmn lw't' dz'nyt' wz'mrt' wmn lw't' dr'bt' wšlyt' wmn
lw't' d'gry' w'gr' d'gr' gzyl myn' wmn lw't'*
- (15) *d'hy' dl' pl'g bkws't' mn hd'dy' wmn lw't' dkl dl't't w'qry't
bšwm 'kwry' wptykry' w'slwmtynyn*
- (16) *'n't 'sy' dm'sy' kwlhyn myhy't' bml'l' 'sy' myhu't' wlw't't'
dl'tt' kl dh'y' wdl'twy' kwlhyn bny' 'n's' lm'h'y'z'wd*
- (17) *gwšn'sp br m'k's 'n't shwt wn<s>ywbynyn lkwlhyn lw't'
dl'twy' lm'h'y'z'wd gwšn'sp wlz'wł k's'z'g wlnh' wlnth'*
- (18) *w'swy' bšwm 'zd'y wy'zrwn wy'qrwn wpr'yl rb' wrwp'yl rb'
wswh't'yl 'n't shwtynyn ws'bynyn lly't't' dl'twy' lm'h'y'z'wd
gwšn'sp*
- (19) *lwz'ył wlnh' wln'tł y'syw llw't' dl'twy' lm'h'y'z'wd*

gwšn'šp wlz'yh wlbnh wlbntḥ wš'd'rynyn 'l m'r'yhyn 'lm'

- (20) *dš'ry' wš'bq' wb'r'k' 'l gl'l' hw {w'bty'} dl' b'zy' y'tbyt
wktbtynyn lkwlhyn lw't' dl'twy' lm'h'y'z'wd gwšn'šp 'l k's'
h'dt' dl' mš'r'y*
- (21) *ws'd'rtynyn wš'kytynyn ll't' dl'twy' [lm'h'y'z'wd gwšn'šp
'l m'r'yhyn 'lm' dhynyn š'ry' wš'bq' wb'r'k' bšwm*
- (22) *š'r['yl] ml'k' wbrk'yl ml'k' 'tyn ml'ky' šrnyn wbrykwnyn 'l
kwl hyn lw't' dl'twy' lm'h'y'z'wd gwšn'šp wšrnyn
m'h'y'z'wd gwšn'šp wmn*
- (23) *z'wh wmn bnḥ wmn bn'tḥ myšry' gbr' mn byt 's[yr'] wmn byt
z'yn' 'myn 'myn 'myn s'lh*

(1) Curses are averted and driven away (2) from M³H³Y³Z³WD GWŠN³ŠP
(3) BR M³K³Š. Hark! The Voice which I hear (4) is the Voice of the weak that
are broken and ... of men who fight and go into battle. Also, the Voice of (5) raging
women who curse, afflict, bewitch and pain (6) this body of M³H³Y³Z³WD
GWŠN³ŠP. Gone down against them: (7) Azdai, Yazrun, Yaqrūn, Præl, Raphæl and
Saḥtæl, who seized (8) and took them by the tufts of the hair of their heads and by the
tresses of their pates. He has broken (9) their horns that were on high and he has
bound them by the tufts of the hair of their heads and by the (10) tresses of their pates.
Then he said to them, «Avert the curse against M³H³Y³Z³WD GWŠN³ŠP». They
said to him, «From (11) the anguish of our heart we have cursed and we have
resolved to curse from the bitterness of our palate». Then I said to them, «I have made
you swear and I adjure you (12) in the name of the dæva Azdai and the dæva Azrun
and Aqrūn and the great Præl and Raphæl and Saḥtæl that you should release and
free (13) M³H³Y³Z³WD GWŠN³ŠP from all the curses and incantations which you
have cursed. Also, from the curses which the father and mother curse.(14) Also, from
the curse of the harlot and singer, from the curse of the mistress and maidservant,
from the curse of the employer and the employee who stole wages from him. Also,
from the curse (15) of the brothers who have not divided the portions fairly amongst
themselves. And from the curse of all who curse and invoke in the name of the
temple-spirits and the image-spirits and their requisitions». (16) You are the healer
who heals all maladies with a word. Heal the maladies and the curses which (she)
curses and which anyone curses against M³H³Y³Z³WD (17) GWŠN³ŠP BR
M³K³Š. You, seize and (take) all thoses curses which are cursed against
M³H³Y³Z³WD GWŠN³ŠP and his wife K³Š³Z³G and his sons and daughters. (18)
Heal in the name of Azdai, Yazrun, Yakrun, great Præl and Raphæl and Saḥtæl.
Seize and take the curses which are cursed against M³H³Y³Z³WD GWŠN³ŠP and
his wife, sons and daughters. May he heal the curses that are cursed against
M³H³Y³Z³WD GWŠN³ŠP and his wife, sons and daughters and send them back

against their original owners (20) (that they should) release, free and bless (them). Upon that unsplit rock I sat and wrote all the curses which they cursed against M^ḥY^zWD GWŠN^ḥSP upon a new bowl that cannot be dissolved. (21) I have sent away and thrown the curses which they cursed against M^ḥY^zWD GWŠN^ḥSP back against their original owners until they release, free and bless (them). By the name (22) of the angel Šariel and the angel Barkiel, you angels, loosen and bless all the curses that they have cursed against M^ḥY^zWD GWŠN^ḥSP. And loosen them from M^ḥY^zWD GWŠN^ḥSP and from (23) his wife, sons and daughters as a man is released from prison and from a stockade. Amen. Amen. Amen. Selah.

Exterior: The gate of that temple.

Notes and Commentary:

1.2 M^ḥY^zWD GWŠN^ḥSP is the name of the client for whom the incantation bowl was written. The Iranian name GWŠN^ḥSP occurs in several Syriac specimens, while Ferdinand Justi mentions a seal with the name māhāzād gūšn (aspān)⁴⁰.

1.4 *wm^ḥyk^ḥšypyn* «and bewitch». Absent in Pognon Texts 15, 16.

1.7 *wy^ḥzrwn wy^ḥqrwn* «Yazrun and Yakrun». These angels' names are variously spelt, attesting to the lack of uniformity in Mandaean orthography. Cf. *y^ḥz^ḥrw* *wy^ḥq^ḥrw* (H.M.S. 1931.1.1) and *yzrwn wyqrwn* (Lidzbarski Text II).

1.7 *pr^ḥyl* «Prael». Qualified by *rb^ḥ* «great» in other «duplicate» texts.

1.7 *wrp^ḥyl* «Raphael». Cf. *rp^ḥyl* H.M.S. 1931.1.1, Lidzbarski Text II, Pognon Text 16; *rp^ḥyl* Pognon Text 15, *wrp^ḥyl* Pognon Text 17.

1.7 *wsh^ḥḥ^ḥyl* «Saḥḥiel». Consistently spelt in «duplicate» texts as *sht^ḥyl*, deriving from √SHḤ «press out, wring out», with a specific connotation in incantation texts «seize»⁴¹.

⁴⁰ See T. Harvaianen, *A Syriac Incantation Bowl in the Finnish National Museum, Helsinki. A Specimen of Eastern Aramaic «Koiné»*, StOr 51, 1978, 1-28 for the publication of a Syriac bowl, I.M. 78630 (not I.M. 7863 as in the publication) which was donated by the Iraqi government to the President of Finland. J. Naveh - S. Shaked, *op. cit.*, (1987) 183 also propose this name for a Syriac incantation bowl which is now housed in the Jewish Historical Museum, Belgrade [No. 243]. Cf. also F. Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch*, Marburg 1895, 185 referring to the publication of the seal in *Revue Archéologique* 15, 1874, pt. V n. 443.

⁴¹ E. Drower - R. Macuch, *A Mandaic Dictionary*, Oxford 1963, 319.

1.8 *b'dqy'* «by the tufts». Cf. *u'dqh mn riš nisbat* «she took bunches of hair from her head» *Ginza yamina* 247:8⁴².

11.8/9 *wtb'r q'm'yyn q'r'm'* «he has broken their horns that were on high». Cf. I Samuel II¹⁰, Jeremiah XLVIII²⁵ and Psalm LXXV¹¹ for the metaphorical use of the horn to denote power and strength⁴³.

1.10 *krwk* «avert». Cf. *šr'y* «dissolve» in Pognon Texts 15, 16, 17.

1.10/11 *mn kyb' dl'b'n l'tyn wmn mr'r' dhynk'n* «from the anguish of our heart we have cursed and from the bitterness of our palate». See *Ginza yamina* 115:16 where the palate is equated with the voice.

1.12 *'zd'y dyw' wy'zrwn dyw'* «the *daeva* Azdai and the *daeva* Yazrun». *dyw'* «*daeva*», used in the original sense of the word as a beneficent rather than maleficent being, is also found in H.M.S. 1931.1.1, but is absent from Lidzbarski Text II and also from Pognon Texts 15, 16 and 17.

1.13 *dmn 'b' w'm' dl'wty'* «from the father and the mother who curse». Cf. the comprehensive lists of bans (*māmītu*) in the Šurpu series of incantation texts. Cf. also the lists of relations: mother, daughter, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, also men and women who curse mentioned by an Aramaic specimen now housed in the Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem [no. 1401]⁴⁴.

1.14 *lwft' q'r'bt' wšlyt'* «of the mistress and maidservant». Discussing this phrase in H.M.S. 1931.1.1 which he has tentatively translated as «of grand(mother?) and foetus (?)», Gordon traces the history of its interpretation⁴⁵. The reading «maidservant» is derived from *√š'L* «request»⁴⁶.

1.15 *mn hd'dy' wmn* «from among themselves and from». At this point H.S.M. 1931.1.1 (ll. 15-16) includes the proper names *Y'HBWY'* and *B'N'DWY'* which Gordon claims to belong to «pair of ill-tempered fellows given to cursing»⁴⁷. This combination, which is also absent from Lidzbarski Text II and also Pognon Texts 15, 16 and 17, may be interpreted as a corruption of *'hy* «brothers» and *bny'* «sons».

⁴² For a translation of the *Ginzā* see, M. Lidzbarski, *Ginzā. Der Schatz oder das Grosse Buch der Mandäer*, Göttingen-Leipzig 1925.

⁴³ See R.M. Boehmer, s.v. *Hörmerkrone*, RIA Band IV, 43-44, for the horned head-dresses or crowns of Mesopotamian deities.

⁴⁴ J. Naveh- S. Shaked, *op. cit.*, 135-45.

⁴⁵ C.H. Gordon, *op. cit.*, 99.

⁴⁶ E. Drower - R. Macuch, *op. cit.*, 441.

⁴⁷ C.H. Gordon, *loc. cit.*

1.17 $k^{\text{ʔ}}\text{ʒ}^{\text{ʔ}}g$ The name of the client's wife, possibly a variant spelling of the Iranian proper name $Xw\partial\text{ʒ}yza$ ⁴⁸.

1.22 $\text{ʒ}^{\text{ʔ}}\text{r}[\text{ʔ}y\text{f}] \text{ml}^{\text{ʔ}}k^{\text{ʔ}} wbrk^{\text{ʔ}}y\text{l} \text{ml}^{\text{ʔ}}k^{\text{ʔ}}$ «the angel Šariel and the angel Barkiel», these names being respectively derived from $\sqrt{\text{ʒ}}R^{\text{ʔ}}$ «loosen» and \sqrt{BRK} «bless»⁴⁹.

⁴⁸ J. Montgomery, *op. cit.*, 277 and F. Justi, *op. cit.*, 182.

⁴⁹ See C.H. Gordon, *loc. cit.*



PLATE I: British Museum 91714

(Courtesy Trustees of the British Museum).



PLATE II: British Museum 91728
(Courtesy Trustees of the British Museum).



PLATE III: British Museum 91736

(Courtesy Trustees of the British Museum).

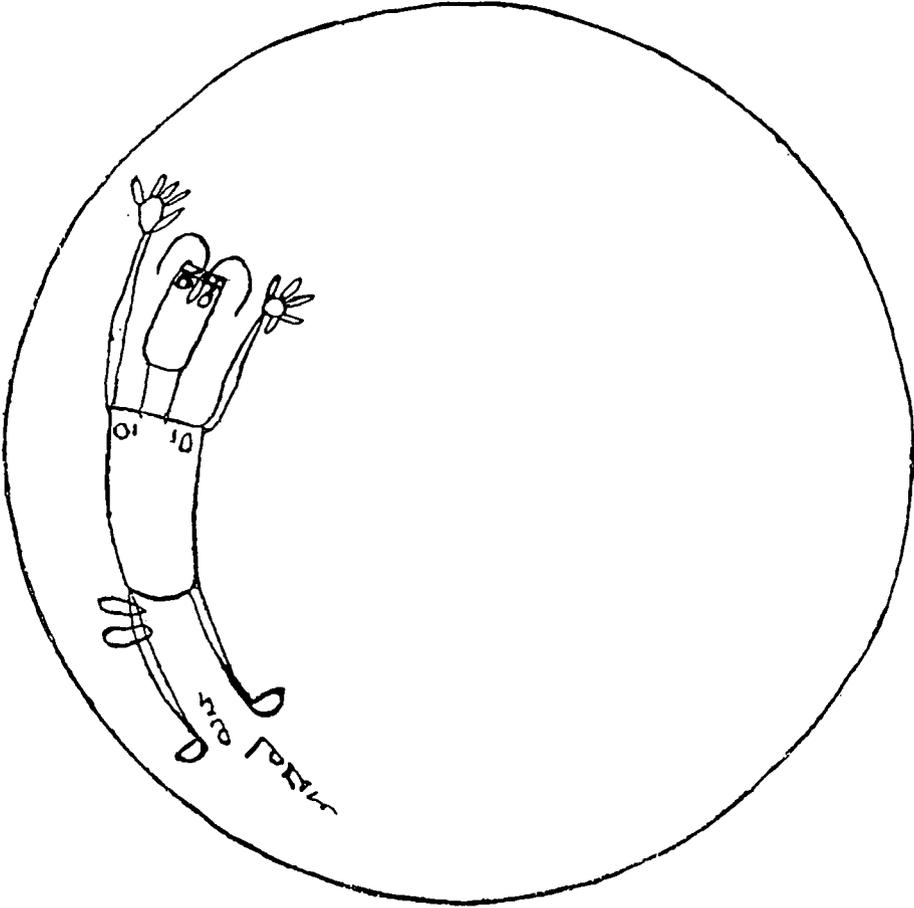


PLATE IV: Pognon Text 15 (line drawing)

(H. Pognon, *Inscriptions Mandaites des Coupes de Khouabir*, Paris 1898)
reproduced by K. Rudolph, *Gnosis* (trans. R. Wilson), Edinburgh 1983, 344.



PLATE V: Harvard Semitic Museum 1931.1.1



PLATE VI: British Museum I35438 (line drawing)

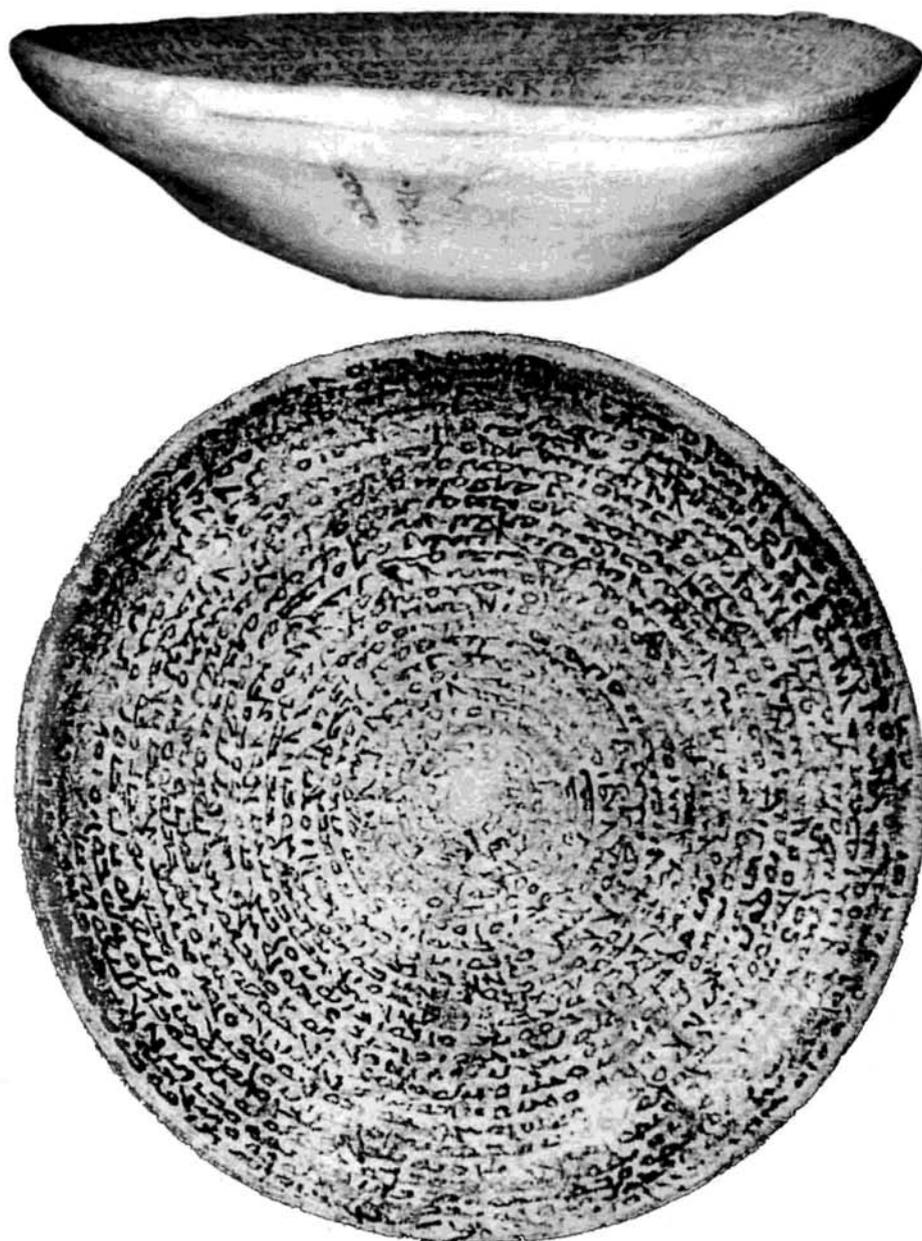


PLATE VII: Iraq Museum 60494

(Courtesy Dept. of Antiquities and Heritage, Republic of Iraq).