Who Wrote the Incantation Bowls?

A Dissertation
Submitted in Partial Fulfilment
of the Requirements for the Degree of Philosophy
to the Department of **History and Culture Studies**
of **Freie Universität Berlin**

Dorit Kedar

Berlin, 2018

Date of defense: February 13th, 2019.

Erstgutachterrin: Prof. Tal Ilan

Zweitgutachter: Prof. Markham Geller

Kommisionmitglieder: Prof. Giulio Busi

Kommisionmitglieber: Prof. Lukas Mühlethaler

Kommisionmitglieder: Dr. des. Christiane Tzuberi

"Be nobody's darling;
Be an outcast.
Take the contradictions
of your life
And wrap around
you like a shawl,
To parry stones
To keep you warm."

Alice Walker - "Revolutionary Petunias"

Thanks, from the bottom of my heart

Once upon a time, I was visiting the Bible Lands Museum in Jerusalem, and a modest display of 3 incantation bowls caught my eye. The intensity of the spiral texts and the ghostly images staring right at me, pushed me to write an historic novel about Komiš - a sorcerous woman who was specializing in writing incantation bowls.

Two years after my book "Komiš bath Mahlafta - a Fake Biography of a Real Woman" had been published, it so happened that I met Professor Tal Ilan. This random encounter brought me to the decision to further explore Komiš' profession with academic tools. Miraculously, the real historic Komiš that emerged from the research was an expert author writing elegant witty incantation formula.

The reversed course of events in which I took a fictional image, and proved her to be a real historic persona - filled me with great delight and with a sense that I myself, created a magical deed.

In the process of writing my research, many people were involved and I am delighted to take this opportunity to thank them.

First, I would like to thank my beloved daughter, Ronni Kedar, who dealt with countless bureaucratic errands that arose in the Holy Land while I was writing my disseration, and found creative solutions on my behalf.

I would like deeply to thank James Nathan Ford, who accompanied me since the early stages of my writing and was extremely generous in his replies to my countless questions, referring me to relevant articles, translations, advices, recommendations, lists; and most importantly – texts of incantation bowls which haven't been published yet. There's no doubt in my mind that without his assistance, this research would not have been the same.

I am happy to thank Prof Markham Geller, for his help and input on the Mesopotamian perspective of my research.

I am likewise happy to thank Ortal Paz Saar for the many articles she sent me, and for her answers to numerous questions.

I would like to thank Ilil Hoz for the translation of the dissertation to English, and to Sari Shimak for hunting all the hidden mistakes which no other eye could spot.

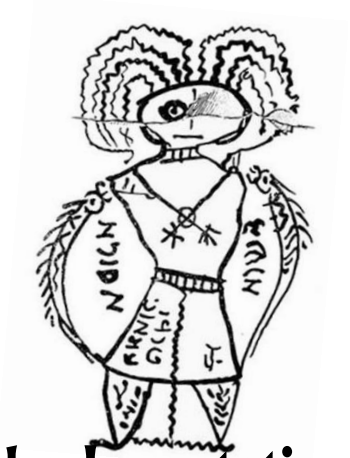
Many thanks go to the designer Salit Krac, who was responsible for the transformation of the 3D figurine into 2D illustration.

Further thanks go to Neta Scheinman, who took charge of numbers, various charts and statistics.

Finally, I would like to take 1000 thanks, wrap each one of them in a fine beautiful paper, and arrange these colorful thanks in a bow, like some luxurious bonbonniere. Two such boxes would be sent out to two precious women.

One box goes to my thesis supervisor, Tal Ilan, every encounter with whom created a special experience of widening horizons and sharpened thoughts. I don't have enough words to thank her for the level of freedom she allowed me in this research, while providing ingenious guidance – Thank you Tal.

The second bonbonniere goes to my beloved sister Orly Schwarz, who managed to turn a foreign city into a home, just for me. I would like to thank her for joining me in exploring the fantastic magic world, through endless conversations and an abundance of creative ideas, which became part of this research – Thank you Orly.



Who Wrote the Incantation Bowls?

Abstract – Wer hat die Zauberschalen geschrieben?

Der Kern dieser Studie ist eine Reise durch Raum und Zeit auf der Suche nach den Autorinnen, deren Berufung es war, die Zauberschalen („Incantation Bowls") zu Schreiben.

Zauberschalen sind ein archäologischer Fund aus dem Irak und aus dem Westen des Irans – große, schüsselförmige Amulette aus Ton mit einer magischen Formel, die sich spiralförmig an ihren Innenwänden befindet. Die Formeln der Schallen sind ein Korpus geschriebener magischer Texte auf Aramäisch, kontemporär mit dem Babylonischem Talmud, mit jüdischen Motiven, in die literarische, liturgische und andere Elemente der Lokalkultur eingeflochten sind. Die Schalle agierte als ein persönliches Amulett und war dazu da, dem Halter eine bessere Zukunft durch die Heraufbeschwörung himmlischer Kräfte und verschiedener übernatürlicher Wesen zu verschaffen. Dieses einzigartige Phänomen entstand ganz plötzlich um das 3. Jahrhundert christlicher Zeitrechnung und schlief genauso abrupt im 7. Jahrhundert mit den frühen muslimischen Eroberungen wieder ein.

Der magische spiralförmige Zauberspruch der Zauberschalen verriet fast nie den Namen der Autoren, die die Beschwörungsformeln schrieben und war verantwortlich für die Austreibung der Dämonen, Geister und anderer übernatürlicher Wesen. Glücklicherweise konnte ich in einigen Schallen einen einzigartigen Stil aufdecken, den ich im Folgenden als "NOMINAL 1st PERSON STYLE" (NFP Style) bezeichne.

Die in NFP Style geschriebenen magischen Formeln brachten acht erfahrene Autorinnen ans Licht, die ihre eigenen Namen in die Beschwörungsformeln einarbeiteten. Darüber hinaus verließen sich diese Schreiberinnen auf ihr eigenes magisches Wissen. Sie entfernten sich davon, im Namen Gottes zu sprechen und begannen, in ihrem eigenen Namen zu sprechen, auch führten sie magische Handlung selbst durch. Durch die Einbettung subversiver Elemente haben diese Autorinnen auch das Wesen der sonst so gebräuchlichen Formeln geändert.

Diese Studie analysiert die literarische Produktion der Autorinnen, die die Zauberschalen geschrieben haben.

Table of contents

Introduction

The incantation bowls, and the anonymous authors who wrote them in late antiquity in Mesopotamia, are the core of this research.

Incantation bowls are sizable clay, bowl-shaped amulets, with a magic formula spiraling along their inner walls, in some cases around illustrations of anthropomorphic figures. The formulae of the bowls are a magic corpus featuring Jewish motifs, into which literary, liturgical, and local cultural elements are woven. All of these are written in several Aramaic dialects, and here we will deal with those written in the square Jewish script. The bowl functions as a personal amulet, intended to better the future of its beneficiary (whose matronymic name is written as part of the incantation formula) by summoning heavenly forces and various supernatural entities. This unique phenomenon came to life all of a sudden around the third century C.E. and died out just as abruptly in the seventh century, with the early Muslim conquests.

The main goal of this thesis is to prove that some (if not most) of the incantation bowls were written by women. In order to achieve this goal, it must first be established that there were indeed women in antiquity who commanded skills that allowed them to compose and transcribe these texts. As a first step, therefore, we need to trace women who acted as writers, either professionally, or as a means to improve their own lives. We would have to expose the women who were acquainted with the art of writing and who had been erased from history by deliberate censorship in the spirit of their times. I do not imagine that the texts can fully clarify or recreate these women's lives, actions, and thoughts. Reconstructing the lives of women in antiquity is impossible. The process performed here is essentially rummaging through assortments of women-related narratives. Unfortunately, the information yielded from historic sources, which were all put down with a masculine quill, is not much more than bits and pieces, from which this study attempts to draw a silhouette of the woman holding the paintbrush and writing incantation bowls.

It is generally difficult to find evidence of women, and particularly of their voices, words, and writings. The historic materials that have survived to this day are available not only because they were preserved, but also because they survived a selective process throughout the years, which obviously included their deletion. This study, however, will not investigate exclusion

politics, but rather try to remove the veil that has been concealing these writing women. In fact, the challenge we face here is exposing the message hidden between the lines and showing that there is a link between women and writing. My thorough search sheds light on the figure of women, brings them out from a state of oblivion and back to the collective memory, and constructs a corpus of information that reconnects the woman and the quill.

This thesis is about professional women writers in Mesopotamia. However it is important to emphasize that the phenomenon of women writing did not occur only in the Sasanian civilization. This thesis goes in two directions – synchronic and diachronic. My attempts to find women who are involved in writing in the first millennium C.E. begins under the Roman Empire in Alexandria and continues through the Sasanian era. Synchronically, I show that women in Alexandria wrote medical, philosophical and scientific texts, and participated in the production of religious texts. This is relevant not just because women could actually write in this milieu, but also because I am interested in magical writings, and Egypt of the first millennium C.E. was, in the eyes of the Babylonian rabbis, the "seat of Magic": "Ten measures of magic came down to the world" the Babylonian rabbis argue, "nine Egypt took and the one the rest of the world." (*bQid* 49b)

I continue diachronically in the geographical regions of the Sasanian Empire. The historical search for intellectual women in Mesopotamia will go back all the way to the third millennium B.C.E., investigating Mesopotamian culture and the women who acted within its magical cosmos. The women of these ancient times (and texts) will lead us to the female authors who wrote the incantation bowls.

The perspective through which this research is conducted views the magical cosmos in general, and that of the incantation bowls in particular, as a sphere which is dependent on cultural context. The incantation bowls contain texts and symbolic images which are supposed to affect a certain audience, whose interpretation of the events is known in advance. The process of writing the incantation formula onto the inner surface of the bowl, and of the bowl burial, was regarded as legitimate activity, intended to alter the existential reality of the bowl purchaser. This perspective allows us to dispense with the hierarchical relations that we naturally assume between the following elements:

- science and faith,
- natural and supernatural forces,

- rational and irrational activity,
- scientific causality and abstract causality.

The suspension of this hierarchy leaves this research outside the interpretive circles of psychology, hermeneutics, or epistemology. Questions of logic, fallacy, or actuality would not be raised in it. Rather, I treat the system implied by the bowls as rational and normative, because they were regarded as conformist elements in the society that produced them, in which men and women authors wrote spiral shaped magical texts, on the inside of clay bowls, which they then buried.

Regarding the temporal delimitation of Mesopotamia: the term was chosen in this research over the names of the political entities Sumer, Akkad, and Babylonia, because this study views Mesopotamian culture from both the historical/chronological perspective and the perspective of magic as a whole. Information from the geographical region of Mesopotamia was transmitted to us through lexical notes on clay tablets dating back to the third millennium B.C.E., which were standardized, edited, processed, and continuously copied from this time down to the time of the incantation bowls, regardless of the rise and fall of this or that empire. Cuneiform tablets inscribed in Assyria were being copied in Akkad, and then again in Babylonia. This process, which took place over hundreds of years, created an element of stability in the magical cosmos in the region.

The essence of this study is a travel through space and time in search of the female authors who wrote the incantation bowls as their profession. The protagonists of this journey are the rabbis and "sorcerous women" (my translation for נשים כשפניות). According to rabbinic discourse, "mostly women engage in witchcraft" (*bSanh* 67a). Could this saying reflect the reality in antiquity? Were women indeed engaged in magic as an occupation?

The magical cosmos and its representatives – the rabbis on one hand, and sorcerous women on the other – accepted the common Mesopotamian assumption that future events are not predetermined. In this fluid reality, fates can be diverted or changed, creating an improved reality through spells and rituals.[1] Both the rabbis and sorcerous women acted as agents of magical forces – the rabbis used forces derived from knowledge of the various names of God and of divine angels, and from a familiarity with the roles assigned to these entities, as

[1] Francesca Rochberg, *In the Path of the Moon* (Brill, 2010) 24.

described, for example, in *Sefer Ha-Razim*.[2] The rabbis' competitors were the sorcerous women, who also conducted magical activities aimed at improving their clientele's reality. As we will see in this paper, these women used powers originating in Jewish tradition as well as quotes derived from Mesopotamian spells and rituals.

The sorcerous women and the rabbis acted within the same magical cosmos, creating amulets and chanting spells, each of the genders (and classes) doing so in their own particular and unique way. The rabbis dealt with the communal aspect, based on fixed rituals, set according to the calendar. Their relationship with the community was a collective one,[3] but they also dealt with personal issues as, so to speak, "freelance" practitioners. Sorcerous women, on the other hand, created rituals which were to take effect at critical times in their purchasers' lives. They resolved personal crises and supplied personal assistance,[4] and their activity was based on commercial relations between a service supplier and a customer. I believe that, while the rabbis wrote amulets, the sorcerous women wrote incantation bowls. The small amulets that the rabbis wrote were personal. The larger amulets, written by the women, were for entire families. The way the rabbis present themselves, they rule the social center stage, whereas sorcerous women act on the margins. Yet is this a correct description of reality? Both groups were perceived by the clients as "legitimate" agents of the magical cosmos. It is safe to assume that they fought over the same market-segment and customers, and over the same profits that could be made in such activities. The difference between them was that the rabbis were striving to monopolize the field, by defining their magic as the only legitimate one.[5] The activity of the sorcerous women was thus characterized by them as idolatry and as contradicting Jewish faith. This social construction of women's actions as harmful to religion was based on an age-old traditional pattern which binds idolatry and promiscuousness.[6] The rabbis defined their own actions as religious practice, while the actions performed by the women were termed witchcraft.[7] The rabbis created a link between the rituals performed by the sorcerous women and idolatry, and in this process they used what we today would designate "shaming," characterizing the practices of

[2] Michael A. Morgan, *Sepher Ha-Razim: The Book of Mysteries* (Texts and Translations; Society of Biblical Literature1983).
[3] D. O'Keefe, *Stolen Lightning: The Social Theory of Magic* (Oxford 1982)14-15.
[4] More about traditional calendrical social ceremonies versus personal ceremonies, see Mischa Titiev, "A Fresh Approach to the Problem of Magic and Religion," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 16 (1960) 292-298.
[5] Jonathan Seidel, *Studies in Ancient Jewish Magic* (Ph.D. Diss. University of California at Berkeley 1996) 177-183.
[6] Melissa M. Aubin, *Gendering Magic in Late Antique Judaism* (Ph.D. Diss. Duke University 1998) 123.
[7] Tal Ilan, *Silencing the Queen: The Literary Histories of Shelamzion and Other Jewish Women* (Tübingen: Mohr Seibeck 2006) 251.

sorcerous women as prohibited and disgraceful.[8] In the power struggles over control, women who posed a threat to the rabbis' status were labeled negatively "witches".[9] The sorcerous women were constantly subject to delegitimization and even demonization. Since it is the rabbis' writings that have survived the test of time, this is the picture to which we usually subscribe.

The discourse strategy developed in rabbinic literature, created, alongside rabbinic discourse, the emergence of a counter-discourse, which used the same vocabulary. The rabbis and the sorcerous women were quoting each other, creating one magical language used both by the Talmud and in the incantation bowls. Let me quote Foucault to make this point clearer:

> "We must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies. It is this distribution that we must reconstruct, with the things said and those concealed… Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it."[10]

The controversy around women, incantations, and prohibitions, appears to be in contrast to the Babylonian Talmud's deafening silence when it comes to incantation bowls as a magical artefact. The phenomenon is never mentioned in the Talmud. This silence reflects a practice used by those in power when the discourse strays towards forbidden or undesirable issues. The Babylonian Talmud refrains from mentioning those it perceives as enemies, and as we shall see, texts concerning women were either completely deleted, or the women in those texts were edited out.[11] When the women are not completely edited out, several characters are combined, reducing the number of women figures.[12] This can be regarded as part of the phenomenon known today as "female tokenism,"[13] i.e., the single mentioning of one "marked" woman who had made her way to the very top of masculine discourse.

---

[8] Ibid., 123.
[9] Jonathan Seidel, "'Release Us and We Will Release You': Rabbinic Encounters with Witches and Witchcraft," *Journal of the Association of Graduates in Near Eastern Studies. Berkeley, CA* 3 (1992) 45–61esp. p. 45.
[10] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (Pantheon Books New York 1978) 100-101.
[11] Ilan, *Silencing the Queen,* 168-172.
[12] Ibid., 38-39.
[13] Barbara Biesecker, "Coming to Terms with Recent Attempts to Write Women into the History of Rhetoric," *Philosophy & Rhetoric 25:2* (1992) 140-161.

In 1979, Adrienne Rich coined the term "female tokenism" to describe the reinforcement of one woman at the expense of other women, in the sense that one woman is being "tokened" – used as a "token." Her theory offers a feminist gender perspective on power struggles. The woman specified as the "token woman" reaches the top, and is chosen because of her "manlike" thinking; thus preserving the status quo. This means that the power granted her is virtual. That woman seems to have access to leadership roles and gain the implied recognition and compensation. Her new status causes her to perceive herself as a strong, separate entity, endowed with special skills. From this new position at the top, she now separates herself from other women. She becomes part of the society of men, who give her a voice at the expense of the voices of other women who are silenced. In her high position, the token woman ceases to be part of the community of women, and other women cease to see her as one of their own. This practice of dominant male society, in which women are offered higher status on condition that they maintain the status quo, has had an effect on the perception of women and their significance throughout history. An historical study which portrays talented and educated women as a unique phenomenon, leads to scholarly research which focuses on that one particular woman. Scholars will therefore not look for the social networks surrounding that one woman, and inquire what it is that made it possible for her to reach the top, and she will remain a one-time incident, a form of human *hapax legomenon*.

The encounter with "the chief of sorcerous women" (רישתינהי דנשים כשפניות), recounted by Ameimar (*bPes* 110a-110b) is the odd case, which can be regarded as "female tokenism." Not only does "the chief of sorcerous women" get mentioned one single time in the Talmud, but the expression "sorcerous women" appears on only two occasions (*bPes* 110a-110b; and bYoma 83b). It seems as if this entire "sector" was removed from the Babylonian Talmud by careful editors.[14] Another example of female tokenism in the Talmud is a woman by the name of Em, whose healing methods were quoted by Abaye many times in its pages. She is the "token female" who makes the mention of other women in the profession unnecessary. (I will elaborate and shed more light on Em in chapters two and three).

The Talmud also has a tendency to make artefacts disappear if they do not fit the rabbis' needs. The incantation bowls as magic amulets are completely missing from the text of the Babylonian

[14] Simcha Fishbane, "Most Women Engage in Sorcery": An Analysis of Sorceresses in the Babylonian Talmud," *Jewish History* 7 (1993) 27-42 esp. p. 35.

Talmud, despite the fact that the bowls were found all over the place in the rabbinic environment, and even a (tiny) fraction of the bowl purchasers carried the title "Rav."[15] This aristocracy did not wish to present Jewish history as beholden to incantation bowls.[16] Sorcerous women and the female authors of incantation bowls, who are, in my opinion, one and the same, were obviously present in the public sphere, and posed a threat to men as private persons. At the same time, they were also a threat to the religious sphere, as the rabbis perceived it. They defended themselves with the following editorial strategies: presenting women in general and sorcerous women in particular, as demonic and as prostitutes; hiding the artefact which represents them, sealing their fate to remain outside of history. Incantation bowls were only revealed in the nineteenth century, when they were found at archaeological excavations.[17]

Perhaps the very act of the burial of incantation bowls aggravated the rabbis, who condemned such colourful syncretism. However, incantation bowls, their formulae, and their burial, filled a void that religion was unable to tackle. It seems that in Mesopotamian antiquity, magic rituals were an integral part of life, possibly replacing canonical ceremonies. It is safe to assume that when rabbinic magic did not yield the expected results, people turned to sorcerous women. Considering the way these women are described by the rabbis, as being close to the demonic world, and as being themselves demonic in essence, it cannot be ruled out be that their services were often preferred to those of the rabbis.

1. Literature Review

There are plenty of women running around between the pages of the Babylonian Talmud. Many of them are busy with harmless activities, such as cooking and baking, chatting and resting, buying food at the market, or healing. Some acted as professional midwives or mourners, as bathhouse attendants or innkeepers – but the rabbis' perception of them, as well as the dynamics of the term witchcraft, shows these women as conspiring to bewitch the world of men and drive

[15] Shaul Shaked, "Rabbis in Incantation Bowls," in Markham J. Geller (ed.) *The Archaeology and Material Culture of the Babylonian Talmud* (Brill 2015) 97-120.

[16] The incantation bowls do not appear in the Talmud. It might be possible to trace some kind of comments hidden well inside medical prescriptions cited in the Babylonian Talmud, as for instance for pneumonia: ליתי גירא דלילתא (an arrow of Lilith - bGit 69b), which might be a corruption where the word גירא was originally written with 'ט, instead of 'ר, i.e. .."גיטא דלילית" (a divorce bill of Lilith). If that is indeed the case, this would be a reference to the genre of divorce document (גט). I would like to thank Prof. Markham J. Geller for bringing this to my attention.

[17] Jacob Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia – Late Sasanian Times* (Brill 1970) 238.

it to sin.[18] Despite this huge potential in women's gendered witchcraft, scholars have not explored in great detail the phenomenon of women who practiced witchcraft either professionally or as a hobby in their spare time in the world of the rabbis. Even the few magical events described in the Babylonian Talmud that have to do with women are, by and large, described from a male perspective. The absence of women in books and articles dealing with the magical cosmos raises questions of tradition, methodology and perspective. Gideon Bohak, whose research deals with the essence of the miracle, but is just as valid for any magical activity performed by women, has this to say on this phenomenon:

> In the Hebrew Bible, the men of God are always men, and while females sometimes perform great deeds – no biblical woman is ever portrayed as reviving the dead, curing the sick, or performing any of the other feats performed by the men of God… this would remain an important paradigm in later Jewish history, with only a few hints in ancient Jewish literature that women too could sometimes perform miracles.[19]

Based on the tales of witchcraft competitions between sorcerous women and the Rabbis, mentioned on the pages of the Babylonian Talmud, Leo Mock defined female witchcraft as harmless. The rabbis saw witchcraft performed by women, says Mock, as mainly restricted to cooking and catering by women, for men. Since the women were where they were expected to be, he claims, the rabbis did not consider them a real threat. "Where the women involved in magic did not cross their social boundaries and were depicted as impotent magicians, their magic is presented as role consolidating and did not involve social activities that were forbidden for women."[20]

Mock is the only scholar who suggests this point of view. The relentless war of the rabbis against sorcerous women is evidence of their great fear of them. To support his argument that the rabbis were not afraid of the power that female witchcraft had, Mock wrongfully claims, as scholars are wont to do, that women did not know how to write: "The important field of written magic was entirely closed to women, and that in fact it was ruled by male magicians, some of whom clearly belonged to rabbinic society. The overtly maleorientation in magical texts may attest to the domination of men in the field of written magic, since literacy among woman in this

[18] Seidel, "'Release Us and We Will Release You'" 46.
[19] Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge University Press 2008) 24.
[20] Leo Mock, "Were the Rabbis Troubled by Witches?" *Zutot* 1 (2001) 39.

period was non-existent."[21] In my opinion, however, the rabbis express much more than just fear of sorcerous women; they express something that could be defined as a phobia that their status as magic experts is being undermined, and that the amulet market would be overturned. As I will show further down, any argument that women as a rule could not read, also does not hold water.

Meir Bar-Ilan, like me, disagrees with Mock. He thinks that the rabbis were indeed intimidated by sorcerous women and their incantations. According to him, "the male author of the midrash, fearful of going to war, shows no fear of strong, experienced warriors, but of a woman, a sorceress wielding her spells against the Israelites." [22] He examines sorcerous women from a social perspective and maintains that the link between women and witchcraft was a tool for the oppression of lower-class women. He adds that: "in ancient times, the boundary between the miracle and witchcraft depended not only on the person's religion, but also on the person's sex."[23] Bar-Ilan contends that higher class men blamed women for all the ills of society and accused them of weakening the male gender. Women's exclusion created a situation in which they were blocked from gaining political power in the existing establishments. Women's only chance of reaching any kind of control was by choosing the non-normative path of specializing in witchcraft:[24] "If women turned to sorcery, this stemmed indirectly from the male oppression that frequently brought about the opposite result: women, as sorceresses, gained control over the men who needed them."[25]

Rebecca Lesses also maintains that the rituals performed by sorcerous women were essentially a resource used to gain power. From this perspective, we can clearly see why the rabbis were worried about those women. Lesses claims that the rabbis defined women's witchcraft as illegal actions, deliberately performed with the intent of exerting power and causing harm. In fact, performing witchcraft and magic rituals is a symbol of women's knowledge and political power, which the establishment is unable to police.[26] "Witchcraft is attributed to those with less explicit roles, who do not properly belong in power, like women in rabbinic culture."[27]

[21] ibid., 38.
[22] Meir Bar-Ilan, *Some Jewish Women in Antiquity* (Scholars Press 1998) 121.
[23] Ibid., 127.
[24] Ibid., 127-128.
[25] Ibid., 129.
[26] Rebecca Lesses, "Exe(or)cising Power: Women as Sorceresses, Exorcists, and Demonesses in Babylonian Society of Late Antiquity," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 69 (2001) 343.
[27] Ibid. 368.

Much like Meir Bar-Ilan, Rebecca Lesses also sees the phenomenon of sorcerous women as the embodiment of accumulated political power. Like them, I believe that sorcerous women indeed achieved high status and social influence. Additionally, they had financial power which they gained as entrepreneurs with vast knowledge, reflected in the essence of the incantation bowls.

Simcha Fishbane agrees with Bar-Ilan and Lesses. He examines the sorcerous women from a social-religious perspective and argues that the Talmud represents a patriarchal society, in which social order prescribes the perception of women as liminal entities, in the margins of the male gender. Women were excluded from most major rituals, because rabbinic society saw them as a threat to social structure. They had to play the role assigned to them by talmudic law, and as long as they stayed within those boundaries, they did not pose any threat. Fishbane therefore suggests that women who lived on the margins of society, or whose status or occupation did not fit the norm, as is the case with sorcerous women, were considered a threat. Unlike women, men who engaged in witchcraft were not perceived as threatening social order, but only as slightly deviating from the law.[28] "The Talmud has difficulty with the concept that women might have supernatural powers similar to those of the Rabbis who achieve their powers as a result of their holiness (and closeness to God) and the Torah. For them, women's supernatural powers can only be a consequence of evil."[29]

Melissa Aubin also examines the relationship between rabbis and sorcerous women through the prism of labeling the other. She claims that the rabbis attacked sorcerous women as human beings, with the allegation that they wish to hurt men, claiming that the spells and incantations by women were not derived from Jewish tradition. Those accused of witchcraft were simultaneously removed from the horizontal and vertical spaces of the rabbis. Horizontally, they were moved outside the Jewish community, and vertically, the activity of sorcerous women was labeled a threat to anything that was considered holy according to the rabbis' criteria:[30] "One notes that behind charges of magic in rabbinic literature stand ideological operations that externalize certain practices or practitioners as heterodox, creating a wide classificatory distance between the named and the namer."[31]

[28] Fishbane, "Most Women Engage in Sorcery," 28.
[29] Ibid., 31.
[30] Aubin, "Gendering Magic in Late Antique Judaism," 119.
[31] Ibid., 122.

Joshua Levinson examines the relationship between the rabbis and sorcerous women from a cultural perspective. He joins the others in claiming that the rabbis represent a voice that is threatening the other.[32] The rabbis see themselves as representatives of the voice of the Torah, even when they engage in acts of witchcraft which are essentially the same as those performed by sorcerous women. In contrast to the rabbis, who are representatives of the establishment, sorcerous women are perceived as illegal forces threatening it. "The Babylonian Talmud continues to represent them as threatening others, but not an ethnic or religious other. From the moment that the Torah becomes the dominant episteme, that constructs the world, then magic itself is transformed into a type of anti-culture."[33]

Michele Murray deals with the hierarchy set by the rabbis, where people were placed on the scale reflected in the Babylonian Talmud. She says that the definition of witchcraft constitutes the main means used by the rabbis to set the social opposing status between a man or a woman. On this scale, the rabbis are at a central and high position, while the sorcerous women are put in the margins and at the very bottom. She argues that "magic was employed as a mechanism for expressing rabbinic perceptions of gender, since the term magic has both positive and negative connotations in the Babylonian Talmud. The valence of the term depended on where the individual who performed the supra-natural action in question was found along the rabbinic taxonomic continuum." [34]

Jonathan Seidel calls the talmudic society a "witchcraft society."[35] As such, the local struggle over power and control is reflected in labeling women as witches, and the same goes for men and anyone who posed a threat to the rabbis' status. Women were the embodiment of the "other," defining the limits of social essence. Rabbis, fighting to defeat inside competition, constructed "otherness," highlighting it in bright colours. The dynamics of witchcraft suggests that the rabbis were mostly worried about charismatic sorcerous women, famous women, and older women. This implies that their insecurity was the result of a rebelling force from inside, from within the community. These women were not following the rules regarding sex and marriage. They could not be policed through control over their bodies. They gained power, weakening the rabbis' status, and at the same time causing potential impurity by breaking the

[32] Joshua Levinson, "Enchanting Rabbis: Contest Narratives between Rabbis and Magicians in Late Antiquity," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 100 (2010) 74.
[33] Ibid., 72.
[34] Michele Murray, "Female Corporeality, Magic and Gender in the Babylonian Talmud," *Religion and Theology* 15 (2008) 199–224 esp. p. 199.
[35] Seidel, "'Release Us and We Will Release You'" 45.

laws of *niddah*.[36] In times of politicization and glorification of the male gender, independent female wisdom was a sign of danger.[37]

As we saw, there is a consensus among scholars dealing with the relationship between rabbis and sorcerous women (apart from Leo Mock), that the former viewed the latter as a political threat to their control and status. Research also shows that the treatment of sorcerous women was stereotypical, and they were perceived as a representation of the other which the rabbis were unable to police. The scholarly approach to Babylonian-Talmudic society – with rabbis on one end of the scale and sorcerous women on the other – can be summarized using Jonathan Seidel's definition of this society as "witchcraft society," where the main means of policing women's non-conformist behaviour is by labeling them witches and their actions as witchcraft.[38]

According to Tal Ilan, "men viewed women as the ultimate other and as such projected onto them all the negative aspects they wished to purge from themselves."[39] I wish to use the three-level dichotomic differentiation proposed by Ilan, between the rabbis' perception of themselves, and their perception of women, respectively: cooks/poisoners; healers/killers; and religion/witchcraft.[40] This differentiation is also present in the way the rabbis perceive witchcraft performed by sorcerous women, despite the fact that the rabbis themselves were involved in the same act of chanting spells, creating amulets, and concocting potions.

2. Thesis Structure

In the first chapter of this research – **Roman-Byzantine Empire: Women as Scientists, Synagogue Heads, Scribes** – women participated in the cultural life of the Roman Empire; they wrote medical, philosophical and scientific texts, and they also wrote letters as part of their daily, routine lives. Among Jewish women, we find some who served as synagogue administrators, scientists, physicians, and some, like Beruriah, were well versed in Halakhah.

The second chapter – **Sasanian Era: Woman as Lawyers, Business Administrators, Priestesses** – follows the changes the Sasanian empire underwent in the time when the incantation bowls were written. My study is based on the only two available Sasanian sources: legal - Hazār dādestān ("A Thousand Judgements") and religious - Hērbedestān (courses of

[36] ibid., 49.
[37] Ibid., 50.
[38] Ibid., 45.
[39] Ilan, *Silencing the Queen*, 241.
[40] Ibid., 240-241.

advanced priestly studies). These texts reflect a state of a relatively liberal approach towards Sasanian women. As for the Jewish community, although there was no real women's renaissance in the way the rabbis portray women, there are Jewish women hiding between the pages of the Babylonian Talmud, who were estate owners and business managers. Heated debates between the rabbis imply that Jewish women were not only able to read, but that they could also write. This chapter features, among others, a woman by the name of Em (אם), whose medical prescriptions are quoted in the Talmud.

The third chapter – **The Mesopotamian Magical Cosmos: Women as Priestesses, Exorcists, Scribes** – goes back to the distant past of Mesopotamian culture, tracing a respectable tradition of writing as an integral part of women's personal and professional lives. This chapter describes the magical cosmos of spells and rituals in which women participated. We will focus on three magical forces harnessed to improve the fates of individuals through the use of spells and rituals – *sympathetic magic*, *contagion magic*, and a *magic of exchange of fortunes*. The influences of the Mesopotamian magical cosmos are evident in the texts and figures drawn on the bowls, and in the burial of the incantation bowls. In this chapter, we encounter Em once again, because one of her magic formulae quoted in the Babylonian Talmud illustrates the extent to which Mesopotamian rituals affected the incantation bowls.

In the fourth chapter – **Incantation Bowl: The Mesopotamian Perspective** – after having found the female authors, we reach the core of this research, analyzing the incantation bowl texts themselves to find the female authors who participated in the local writing tradition. This chapter describes the features of the incantation bowls – texts, metaphors, timeframe and burial procedures, viewed through the prism of magic. The study sheds new light on the image of Lilith, the Jewish demoness, and the burial motif of the incantation bowls.

The fifth chapter – **Who Wrote the Incantation Bowls?** – will define a new term, "Nominal First Person" (NFP), to describe the style used by the women expert writers who were responsible for the producing the texts transcribed on some of the incantation bowls. I will focus on five female authors and elaborate on the uniqueness of their texts, as well as on the way they inherently challenge rabbinic society.

Chapter 1
The Roman-Byzantine Empire – Women as Scientists, Synagogue Heads, Scribes

Women, creative women, women authors – played a significant role in the history of humankind. This chapter focuses on educated, literate women, who lived in the Roman Empire, in Egypt and around the Mediterranean in antiquity in general. The best place to start the exploration of women who took part in the intellectual life of Roman antiquity is Egypt, where old scriptures and ancient artefacts have been preserved due to the dry desert climate. This chapter deals with several groups, including academic women, whose background can be deciphered through their private correspondence, and women who played an active role in religion, as scribes and as other religious functionaries.

Before looking for women who wrote as part of their daily routine, and those who were professional scribes, it is important to note that, according to recent studies, only 15% of the general population in antiquity was literate.[41] Some of those who were literate came from the lower classes. Scribes in the Roman Empire were active on different socioeconomic strata, and on a number of levels, in terms of social and cultural context. We often find scribes amongst slaves, at the bottom of the social scale.[42] Male and female slaves, and freedpersons, were sent to public schools. They learned reading and writing on varying levels, depending on the position to be assigned to them once they were trained.[43] There were registrars and scribes who had learnt writing in the private context, at home. It is rare that any of these numerous enslaved and freed male and female scribes can be identified by name. Scholarly research focuses on handwriting, literary style, materials used as surfaces, and the ink used for writing, but barely addresses the question of who the writers were. The disinterest in the author is also typical to the study of incantation bowls.

It is important to say a word about education. In the Greco-Roman culture in Egypt women of both the higher and lower classes were educated and literate. Instruction of writing was common for girls as it was for boys. During the fourth and fifth centuries, boys and girls of wealthier families received traditional classical education, based on Greek or Roman models. Children went through two levels of education – primary and secondary. Classes in rhetoric were not

[41] Kim Haines-Eitzen, *The Gendered Palimpsest: Women, Writing, and Representation in Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press 2012) 7.
[42] ibid.
[43] Ibid., 55.

compulsory for girls, who were usually not expected to deliver speeches in public life.[44] The pedagogical approach allowed for home-schooling. General education and writing as part of obtaining general knowledge was common in the elite social circles of Greco-Roman culture. We can also assume – despite some Talmudic arguments to the contrary regarding the teaching of girls – that Jewish women enjoyed education and received lessons in writing, both in Eretz Israel and in Babylonia. I will come back to this later.

In search of women who were also writers at the time that the incantation bowls were produced, the best place to begin is in fourth century C.E. Alexandria. Compared to what was common in the old world, this city produced a relatively liberal legislation regarding the political rights of women, their guardianship, marriage, divorce, property, and inheritance. These rights were reflected in education, literature, and free movement. All these factors created a situation in which women had more opportunities to express themselves, compared to other places.[45]

The population of Alexandria was ethnically diverse, which resulted in the development of a syncretistic culture, and also of ethnic tensions. This city was unlike any other in Egypt, around the Mediterranean, or in the Roman Empire. Its Great Library, and the scholars who studied in it contributed to an atmosphere of writing, and teaching women. These multicultural characteristics were evident in every aspect of the city.[46] They created an atmosphere in which women were able to thrive. Although most of their activity was only recorded and reported indirectly, it is likely that women assumed the roles of educators, teachers, administrators, rhetoricians, philosophers, and physicians.[47] I will first highlight some of these women of whom we have evidence.

1. Women Scholars

A famous woman in fourth century Alexandria is Hypatia (355-415 C.E.), an author, scientist, and philosopher, who (also) taught men and ran her own academy.[48] Hypatia was the head of the

[44] Katz, Phyllis B. Katz, "Educating Paula: A Proposed Curriculum for Raising a 4th-Century Christian Infant," *Hesperia Supplements* 41 (2007) 115-127 esp. p. 119.
[45] Cara Minardi, *Re-Membering Ancient Women: Hypatia of Alexandria and her Communities* (Ph.D. Diss. Georgia State University 2011) 63.
[46] More about Alexandria see ibid., 44-75.
[47] Ibid.,110.
[48] More about Hypatia, see Edward J. Watts, *Hypatia: The Life and Legend of an Ancient Philosopher* (Oxford University Press 2017).

department of Mathematics and Philosophy at the University of Alexandria. Her lectures were very popular, and her fans would also gather at her private residence, which became an intellectual hub. She taught diverse subjects: mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, and mechanics. She assisted her father, Theon, in editing his writings on Euclid's Elements. The tenth century Suda Lexicon, which provides information about her, listing her skills, innovations, and influence, has the following to say of her: "She wrote a commentary on Diophantos, the Astronomical Canon, and a commentary on the Conics of Apollonios … Putting on the philosopher's cloak although a woman and advancing through the middle of the city, she explained publicly to those who wished to hear either Plato or Aristotle or any other of the philosophers."[49] Her brutal murder was fueled by a Christian anti-academic and misogynist zeal,[50] which also resulted in the destruction of all her writings.

The letters of one of her students, Synesius of Cyrene, who later became the Bishop of Ptolemais, are an additional source of information on Hypatia. A letter he wrote in 402[51] includes sketches of several of the scientific instruments she used for experiments in astronomy, measuring time, distilling water, and determining water density. After Hypatia's times, the western world would not witness any major development in the scientific fields of Physics and Astronomy for another 1,000 years.

2. Women Physicians

Women in Alexandria also acted as physicians. It appears that 5% of the physicians in the Roman Empire were women.[52] Evidence for women physicians, who put their medicine and prescriptions in writing, is found in a book by the 1st-2nd century physician and philosopher Galen – "The Composition of Medicines by Type." This is a pharmacologic collection with an abundance of medical prescription and remedies. It mentions by name eight women physicians: Spendusa, Samithra, Originea, Eugerasia, Cleopatra, Antiochis, and Xanite.[53] In addition we find a Jewish woman named Salome, whom he also mentions, I will discuss her later.[54]

[49] "Hypatia" in *Suda online search* 2017, available at http://www.stoa.org/sol-bin/search.pl

[50] More about brutal Christian acts of political violence in the conflict between Alexandria's Christian and pagan communities, see Christopher Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (JHU Press, 1997) 278-330.

[51] The full letter – Text Synesius, Letter 015 can be read in *Livius: Articles on ancient history* 2017, available at http://www.livius.org/sources/content/synesius/synesius-letter-015/

[52] Rebecca Flemming, "Women, Writing and Medicine in the Classical World," *The Classical Quarterly N.S.* 57 (2007) 257-279 esp. p. 259.

[53] For a discussion of books and medical prescriptions composed by women, see Holt N. Parker, "Galen and the

There are other sources in which women doctors are implied, and fragments in which their writings are mentioned. Holt M. Parker collected these fragments as well as notes scattered in different writings in an attempt to rewrite women physicians back into history. [55] One of the main hurdles in the search for women physicians, is the translation into modern languages of the title writers used in describing their profession. Male physicians were referred to with the Greek word "Iatros" – physican; women were described with the female form of the same word "Iatrine", which has consistently been translated as "midwife." So too is the case in Latin: men bearing the title "Medicus", are described in modern literature as physicians, while women with the corresponding title "Medica" were demoted to the role of midwife.[56]

Parker lists in his study around 40 women doctors from late antiquity, some of whom lived in the western and eastern regions of the Byzantine Empire.[57] In those times, medical training was based on an apprenticeship system. Most women physicians received informal education, at home, taught by their father or husband, who were themselves physicians, and according to the fragments mentioned by Parker, they excelled in their work. Additionally, we find women's prescriptions and opinions quoted in later writings, like that of the seventh century Paul Aegineta, who composed a medical encyclopedia with an assortment of summarized treatment methods and selected prescriptions by male and female physicians specializing in various areas,[58] and mentioned, inter alia, the following women physicians: Gemina of northern Africa (third century); Empeiria of Adada, Pisidia, in Turkey (third century); and Aurelia Alexandra Zosime of Rome (second century).[59]

Female physicians provided various treatments to women, which were not covered by the narrow definition of a midwife. Soranus of Ephesus, who was considered the world's most renowned gynaecologist in the 2nd century C.E., includes some information relevant to our study. He links between literacy and the proficiency level of a midwife,[60] and argues that the ability to read and write was one of the attributes crucial to a woman's high performances as a

Girls: Sources for Women Medical Writers Revisited," *Classical Quarterly* 62 (2012. 359–386.

[54] Tal Ilan, "Salome's Medicinal Recipe and Jewish Women Doctors in Antiquity," Forthcoming. I would like to thank Tal Ilan for letting me use this unpublished article.

[55] Holt N. Parker, "Women doctors in Greece, Rome, and the Byzantine Empire" in Lilian R. Furst (ed.) *Women Physicians and Healers: Climbing a Long Hill* (University Press of Kentucky 1997) 131-150.

[56] Ibid., 268.

[57] Ibid., 140-146.

[58] Ibid., 137.

[59] Flemming, "Women, Writing and Medicine in the Classical World," 259.

[60] Ibid., 261.

midwife, because it enabled her to gain knowledge of medical theory and practices described in professional literature. Learning midwifery included going through theoretical and practical books. Muscio, who lived in the 6th century, often quotes Soranus in his essay on gynaecology. After providing information on the issue of the midwife's literacy, he comments that the midwives of his time suffer from a linguistic deficit regarding Latin literacy. He therefore provides, in his writings, Greek translations for Latin terms and concepts, simplifying the instructions and theoretical parts, arguing that in this way they become more accessible to midwives.

In any case – midwives were educated. Scholars attest that midwives were able to read both in Latin and Greek. It also seems likely that they were able to write, based on the medicines and potions women invented and transmitted, and which they had very likely put down in writing, and from which male physicians, who had composed books, copied.

3. Educated Women outside Alexandria

It is important to remember that we are dealing with an era in which reading and writing were viewed as two distinct skills, and the latter cannot be inferred from the former. Neither reading nor writing were necessary skills in antiquity. Nevertheless, reality prescribed that a woman who wanted to be independent and represent herself before government officials, had to master the art of writing. This was true not only for Alexandria, but also for all other cities within the Roman Empire.

A Papyrus archive from Hemopolis reveals wealthy a fourth century woman by the name of Aurelia Charité, a member of the city's social elite. She was a widow and owned lands in both the city and the countryside. Aurelia Charité appears in 42 papyri. Among these documents, we find her own statement that she can read and write, as well as a similar a statement by her mother, Demetria. Some of the documents are in her own handwriting, and we can infer that the task of writing was a matter of routine for her.[61] The contracts describe Aurelia Charité by the term "knower of letters," typically used in such contracts. She also states in the contract that she is signing it for herself. These two elements are found time and again in papyri contracts signed by various women representing themselves, and like Aurelia Charité, all of them came from the

[61] Jennifer A. Sheridan,"Not at a Loss for Words: The Economic Power of Literate Women in Late Antique Egypt," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 128 (1998) 189-203.

well-to-do of Hermopolis. Four such women are worth mentioning, along with the financial fields in which they participated:[62]

- Tinoutis and Artemidora – signing a lease on a plot of land.
- Artemidora, Aurelia, and her mother Polzdeukes – signing an agreement regarding their house.
- Koprilla, Daughter of Nikon – signing a financial contract.
- Aurelia Isidora – joining her two brothers as their partner in a contract.

Roman law allowed women – regardless of whether they were single, married, or widowed, and regardless of their social class – to conduct business, as long as they were able to read and write. Conversely, Roman legislation protected illiterate women by an appointing for them a guardian, a man, who was supposed to protect their interests and read for them documents in which they were involved. Aurelia Charité and the other aforementioned women received the independent status of "*ius liberorum*" – and were thus legally permitted to write contracts and represent themselves when signing them.

Another important document providing evidence regarding women's literacy skills, as well as financial independence, is a petition composed in 263 C.E. by a woman named Aurelia Thaisous, alias "Lolliane." In an appeal in which she asks to be exempt from guardianship she states: "… since I am blessed with the honor of having children, literate to a high degree, able to write easily, fully assured I appeal to your highness with this application that I be able without hindrance to perform all businesses I henceforth will transact."[63]

Lolliane's argument shows that literacy renders a woman capable of representing herself, without the need for a guardian to protect her interests. It appears that her appeal was successful, because three years later, we find a document attesting that she was indeed running her own business, and signing a contract without a guardian.[64] It is true, though, that these monetary and financial contracts do not allow us to estimate how large the population of literate women actually was. Our data derives from chance finds of specific contracts. The discovery of additional documents may lead to the discovery of other literate women, since we also find evidence of literate women's activity outside the legal realm. In the private sphere, women

[62] Ibid., 197.
[63] Text POxy. XlI.1467.2-2 1 ibid., 199.
[64] Text POxy. XII. 147 ibid.

composed personal letters, in which they discussed day-to-day matters, and to which we shall now turn.

4. Women of Letters

Roger Bagnall and Raffaella Caribore collected 210 letters written by women between 300 B.C.E. and 800 C.E., preserved on papyri from Egypt. Their book, *Women's Letters from Ancient Egypt,*[65] reveals writings by women coming from a socioeconomic background which we would nowadays refer to as middle class. The women writing these letters had professions, property, lands, and financial means.[66] The letters deal with various matters, describing these women's feelings, work, and other activities.

In terms of contents, the letters serve practical purposes, focusing on family or business difficulties, or delivering news. A qualitative analysis of the letters reveals a standard structure, especially in the opening and closing sections. It seems that educated women learned the art of writing letters in school.

Below are a few quotes from letters from the period relevant to our study, which are assumed by scholars to have been written by the sender herself. Bagnall and Caribiore set a number of criteria to determine which of the letters is in the sender's own handwriting. They claim that feminine writing is typically personal in its nature, unlike that of professional scribes. They also argue that women's handwriting is more distorted, and less homogeneous, i.e., that there are inconsistencies in the letters, their size, and the spacing between letters and words. The rhythm of the writing changes between paragraphs, and there is dripping of ink on the page.[67] It is, however, difficult to accept the criteria these scholars set for feminine handwriting, which seem to be tainted by pre-conceived notions of feminine essentialism. While I cannot suggest an alternative tool for evaluation, I intend to show further down that certain women's handwriting at the time was described as beautiful. Additionally, in my fifth chapter, focusing on the incantation bowls, I present two authors, a man and a woman, each of whom wrote the same formula on an incantation bowl. The female author (Komiš Daughter of Mahlafta) can be described as having an "elegant semi-formal hand," while the male author (Huniyāq Son of

[65] Roger Bagnall and Raffaella Cribiore, *Women's Letters from Ancient Egypt: 300 BC-AD 800* (Ann Arbor University of Michigan Press 2006).
[66] More about women's letters see Jane Rowlandson, *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt: A Sourcebook* (Cambridge University Press 1998) 190-313.
[67] More about handwriting see ibid., 41-67.

Aḥāṯ) can be described as having a "crude semi-formal hand," and the attributes assigned by Bagnall and Caribiore to women's letters, actually appear in the bowl written by the male author.

From a reply sent by Jerome (the translator into Latin of the Vulgata) in 401-2 C.E., to a women named Laeta, who had asked for instructions regarding the education of her daughter, Paula, and for advice on alphabet-learning techniques, we discover how young women were learning to write. His letter is a form of pedagogical guide: "As soon as she begins to use the style upon the wax, and her hand is still faltering, either guide her soft fingers by lying your hand upon hers' or else have simple copies cut upon a table, so that her effort confined within these limits may keep to the lines traced out for her and not stray outside of them."[68]

Further evidence proving there were literate women, and furthermore, that they had beautiful handwriting, can be found in the writings of the Church father Eusebius of Caesarea (fourth century). Eusebius records the early days of the Church, including Church Father Origen's journey from Alexandra to Caesarea in 232 C.E. Certain professionals joined him on this journey, such as scribes and stenographers. Eusebius mentions the scribes, "…as well as girls trained for beautiful writing."[69]

Going back to the women's letters, I quote some segments which they had written, in order to expose the variety of women who mastered the art of writing.

- An anonymous woman (2nd century) writes a letter to her husband, giving him business advice. Her writing is exquisite, and it would seem like she indeed wrote the letter by herself: "if I could take hold of the management of our property, I would not hesitate, but in any case, as I am a woman, I exercise every care ... Thus nobody is discouraged as to sell property. But if God allows a large yield next season, soon, because of what will be the low price of the produce, the landowners will be discouraged, so that we will be able to buy at a low price …"[70]
- Eutychis (third century) was presumably a merchant. She writes to her mother on her own from where she has arrived, as part of a business-related journey. She reports that her arrival was delayed due to transportation difficulties. The camel driver refused to take her to her

[68] Kim Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters: Literacy, Power, and the Transmitters of Early Christian Literature* (Oxford University Press 2000) 61**;** More about Jerome's letter see Katz, "Educating Paula," 122.
[69] Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters* 42.
[70] Bagnall and Cribiore, *Women's Letters from Ancient Egypt*, 162.

desired destination, and she could not find a boat: "… Now I considered bringing my loads to Antinoou and staying there until I find a boat and sail down. Please give the people who deliver to you this letter of mine two and a half talents of new coinage…"[71]

- Didyme (fourth century) was probably the head of a group of ascetic Christian women. She writes to a member of the group: "To my lady sister Atienatia". The letter is about business. Her handwriting is stylish and good. Her opening greeting – In the name of God – is common in Christian writings. Another letter she composed is to Sophias, regading food supply:[72] "…There is a balance with us from the money of your orders, I believe, of 1,300 denarii. Canopic cakes received for you from them will be dispatched…".[73]
- Klematia (fourth century) was a land owner. She uses rather poor, spoken language, and does not completely master the art of writing. Her letter to Papnouthis contains instructions for delivery of food, drink, and wool: "Measure out six artabas of wheat and lentils into the boat of Pagas so that we may have them here, and help Pagas so that we may have the extra payments…"[74]

5. Jewish Women

Among these educated literate women, we also find Jewish women. For all the reasons that were mentioned we do not find so many of them, but the following is an attempt to list Jewish women who were scientists, physicians, Synagogue Heads and rabbinic scholars.

5.1 *A Scientist in Alexandria*

Maria the Alchemist, also known as Maria the Hebrew, was a scientist and author who was active in third century Alexandria. She had apparently written several books, but none of her writings has survived. Quotes from her work are found in the writings of Zosimos, a fourth century alchemist who co-authored a 28-volume encyclopedia with his sister, Theosebeia (another woman scientist). They quote past research, and regarding Maria they Hebrew, they say that she has written essays on different materials, processes, and transformation – in other words she was involved in physics and chemistry. One of the essays she wrote was antitled "Treatise on furnaces and apparatuses." In this essay Maria apparently devised lab equipment, such as the

[71] Ibid., 371.
[72] Ibid., 196.
[73] Ibid., 194.
[74] Ibid., 213.

tribikos, used for distillation, and the *kerotakis*, used for evaporation and condensation in the process of refining metals. One of her most famous inventions was Maria's water bath – *balneum Mariae* – which has been used by chemistry and food labs ever since.[75] Raphael Patai writes that "Maria appears not only as an expert practitioner of alchemy, but also as a person of great erudition in its tradition and lore."[76]

5.2 *Physicians*

In his book, the physician Galen mentions the names of 8 women physicians, one of whom is a Jewish women named Salome. As was customary in the ancient world, she personally created a unique prescription for severe throat ache and rib pains.[77] Another woman physician, is mentioned in the Jerusalem Talmud, Timtinis (תימטיניס), a specialist who treated Rabbi Yochanan for an eye disease (*yAZ* 2:2 ,40d). When her story was transferred from the tractate of Avodah Zara to Shabbat, the editor felt that harmonization was required. He decided to correct the name of Timtinis, reducing it to an appellation – and so she became the daughter of Domitianus (yShabbat 14:4, 14d). The removal of her name also erased her physician personality. She was no longer independent, but rather associated with her father. The third step in the deletion process of this Jewish woman physician occurred when her narrative traveled to Babylonia. In its third version, the physician becomes a gentile. She is now referred to by a generic non-Jewish, Roman title – "matron" (מטרוניתא, *bAZ* 28a).[78]

5.3 *Women of Letters*

Amongst the women's letters from Egypt found on papyri, two were written by Jewish women, in Aramaic. The contents of these letters reveal educated women, who mastered the art of writing and were familiar with biblical and rabbinic phrases.[79]

- **Harqan** (fifth century) was an educated woman who was well integrated into Jewish culture. She wrote a brief letter to her brother, in the hope of maintaining the family ties.

[75] Minardi, *Re-Membering Ancient Women*, 44-50**;** For more about Maria the Hebrew, see Raphael Patai, *The Jewish Alchemists: A History and Source Book* (Princeton University Press 2014) 60-53**.**
[76] Ibid., 64.
[77] Ilan, "Salome's Medicinal Recipe and Jewish Women Doctors in Antiquity," forthcoming.
[78] For a discussion see Ilan, *Silencing the Queen* 168-172.
[79] Tal Ilan, "An Addendum to Bagnall and Cribiore, Women's Letters from Ancient Egypt: Two Aramaic Letters from Jewish Women", forthcoming. I would like to thank Tal Ilan for letting me use this unpublished article.

Her writing is in high literary Hebraized Aramaic, incorporating rare talmudic expressions.[80]

"Fromṇ Harqan daughter of Yoḥanan the Priest to 'Eleazar my dear brother and beloved, my honor and my prospect, my remnant of the house of my Father. Peace. The prayers of my sons are for your life and (for the life of) Mariam my sister, your partner and (for the life of) your sons."[81]

- **Sarah** (fourth century) wrote a letter to her sons, Tanḥum and Yiṣḥaq, sending her regards to them and expressing her hope that they might meet again soon. She informs her sons that she had received a certain sum of money, which she keeps for them. Like Harqan's letter in Aramaic, Sarah's style is also full of talmudic expressions. She might have been using a letter-writing guidebook, or possibly dictating the letter to a professional scribe who "corrected" her style.

  "Peace (סגי שלם) from Sarah, from her to you, you Tanḥum and Yiṣḥaq my sons. Abundant peace from the Master of Heaven…. and the Lord of Heaven will show me the honor of your faces in peace and will send [me news of?] your wellbeing."[82]

5.4 *A Female Rabbinic Scholar*

As with Christian Scriptures, we can also revive women and the activities in which they were involved, by reviewing earlier texts in rabbinic literature and how they were transformed to the detriment of the women in their later developments. The figure of Beruriah is the one example we can bring here. She is the only women which any rabbinic text describes as being well versed in *Halakhah*. In the Tosefta, in a dispute between Rabbi Joshua and Rabbi Tarfon, Beruriah gives a certain ruling regarding a Shabbat prohibition, to which Rabbi Joshua responds: "Beruriah has spoken well" (*tKel BM* 1:6).[83] If we then look at the parallel this ruling has in the Mishnah, which would be a later version in this case, we find that it completely omits Beruriah, giving Rabbi Joshua the credit for the ruling (*mKel* 11:4).

Aside from this tradition, only one other is attributed to a woman, and it too involves the state of purity of an object. The other woman we find in the Tosefta is the daughter of Hananiah ben

[80] Ibid.
[81] Text Ms. Heb. e. 12:, ibid.
[82] Text P. 8283 (Berlin) ibid.
[83] Ilan, *Silencing the Queen,* 57.

Tardion. Her ruling is likewise praised by Rabbi Judah: "His daughter said well" (*tKel BQ* 4:17). This daughter, who has no name in the Tosefta, was destined to disappear in a different way. The Babylonian Talmud uses the tactic of merging her character with that of Beruriah, making Beruriah into the daughter of Hananiha ben Tardion. By creating a literary formula that has no support in history, the Babylonian Talmud reduces the number of educated scholarly women.[84]

5.5 *Synagogue Heads*

Bernadette Brooten collected 19 inscriptions which highlight the fact that Jewish communal leadership was not solely the domain of men, and that women served as leaders in a number of synagogues during the Roman and Byzantine periods.[85] These inscriptions prove that Jewish women were neither homebound nor secluded. They had authority in matters that were traditionally reserved for Jewish men only. The titles these synagogue administrators held were not derived from the name of their husbands or fathers, but rather from their own doings.

The following women acted as "*archisynagogisa*" – synagogue heads, in the period relevant to our study:

- Rufina (second century) – synagogue head in Smyrna, Ionia (Asia Minor).
- Sophia of Goryn (fourth or fifth century) – synagogue head in Kisamo, Crete.
- Theopempte (sixth century) – synagogue head in Caria, Asia Minor. She also contributed her own money to sponsor a curtain for the synagogue.
- An anonymous woman who was a synagogue head in Nevsehir Cappadocia, Turkey.[86]

It is possible that this high position was inherited by these women from their fathers. It was very common in antiquity for professions to be passed down in the family as in the cases of medicine, philosophy or sciences that we saw above. Other women who handled other administrative duties in the synagogue had other titles. The "mother" of the synagogue was a title carried by Veturia Paulla, Alias Sarah, Coelia Paterna, and Simplicia all from third or fourth century Rome. Alexsanra (fifth century), also from Rome, is actually referred to as "paterssa" – father of the synagogue.[87]

[84] ibid.,179-200.
[85] Bernadette Brooten, *Women as Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue*, (Brown Judaic Studies 1982) 5-34.
[86] Ibid., 216.
[87] Ibid., 220.

In conclusion, broadening our search for women beyond the rays of the traditional streetlamp reveals a picture of a society in which women wrote as an occupation and as a necessary skill of their daily routine.

Chapter 2
The Sasanian Empire – Women as Lawyers, Business Administrators, Priestesses

In regions within the Roman Empire, into which we have been looking thus far, we found some written evidence regarding professional women and writing. About the area where the incantation bowls were discovered, however, we only have a very vague idea. Only two written texts from the Sasanian Empire relate in any way to women. The first is a civil law document, *Hazār dādestān* (*A book of Thousand Judgements*), an assortment of 1,000 rulings from trials held under the Sasanian legal system,[88] some of which involve marital and family affairs. The second is a religious document, the *Hērbedestān* (*Courses of Advanced Priestly Studies*). The text deals with the conditions affecting who will participate in advanced priestly studies and under what circumstances.[89]

1. Women's Education in the Sasanian Empire

Women in the Sasanian Empire always had male guardian to represent them, throughout their lives.[90] Nevertheless, a married woman was entrusted with some responsibilities, like running the house or taking care of the children and other members of the family. The head of the family, the patron, was considered praiseworthy if he provided his wife, children, and Zoroastrian slaves with education.[91] The education Sasanian women received included business administration and intellectual reasoning. If a woman had been educated by her father or husband, the husband was allowed to appoint her as his business partner, in which case she was permitted to make investments using the family capital, and spend any profits as she saw fit.[92] Husbands generally allowed their wives to make use of some of the capital as long as any property transactions did not involve land, water, plants, houses, or the sale or purchase of two whole slaves.[93] Women were allowed to inherit their husbands' assets and to continue to run the

[88] Fore more see Maria Macuch, "Mādayānī Hazār dādestān (Book of a Thousand Judgements)," *Encyclopædia Iranica, Online Edition* 2017, available at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/madayan-i-hazar-dadestan
[89] More about Hērbedestān see Firoze M. Kotwal, "Hērbedestān," *Encyclopædia Iranica, online edition*, 2017, available at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/herbedestan
[90] Jamsheed K. Choksy, *Evil, Good, and Gender: Facets of the Feminine in Zoroastrian Religious History* (Peter Lang New York 2002) 88.
[91] Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Mansour Shaki and Jeanette Wakin, Family Law, *Encyclopædia Iranica, online edition*, 2017, available at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/family-law
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.

family estate, without a guardian.[94] Sasanian women could be the representatives of family matters in court, and they were allowed to serve as witnesses. From a comment in *A Thousand Judgments*, we learn that women also studied law and some served as lawyers.[95]

It is important to realize that this situation did not develop in a vacuum. As early as the third century, a demographic crisis occurred in the Sasanian Empire. Yaakov Elman presumes that a shortage of adult upper-class males was brought on by continuous wars and by plagues. The result of this situation was a shortage of males to inherit and own family estates. In order to insure the continuation of the family-line and the preservation of the estates, elite women were allowed to serve in traditional male roles. Upper-class Iranian women were permitted to manage family estates.[96] It was preferable to appoint a wife or daughter to manage the estate than to transfer it to a more distant kinsman, or to a stranger. It may have been this problem that Sasanian law and the representatives of Sasanian religion addressed when they opened up more opportunities for women.[97]

Again, I would like to emphasise that due to this shortage of upper-class men, women were more independent and held positions that would have otherwise be held by men. We can recognize this phenomenon in the aftermath of World War II and in Rwanda after the genocide. In these places in time, as in the Sasanian Empire, the status of women has risen as a result of the necessities created by commonplace reality.

Regarding religion – the Zoroastrian approach to women can be deduced from the way menstruation was treated. Zoroastrianism postulates that menstruation was created by the evil God, and that it was the source of evil in the world. Religious law stated that during menstruation, women posed a danger to persons as well as to the environment. They were prohibited from participating in daily activities and had to stay at least fifteen steps away from any sacred place of fire or water. During their period, women were kept in secluded windowless

[94] Yaakov Elman, "Scripture versus Contemporary Needs: A Sasanian/Zoroastrian Example," *Cardozo Law Review* 28 (2006) 157.

[95] Aḥmad Tafażżolī, Education ii. in the Parthian and Sasanian Periods, Encyclopædia Iranica, *online edition*, 2017, available at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/education-ii.

[96] For a different interpretation of excluding women from managing family estates see Maria Macuch, "Disseminating the Mazdayasnian Religion: An Edition of the Pahlavi Hērbedestān Chapter 5," in W. Sundermann, A. Hintze, F. de Blois, (eds.) *Exegisti monument. Festschrift in Honour of Nicholas Sims-Williams* (Wiesbaden 2009) 251-277 esp. p. 268.

[97] Yaakov Elman, "Marriage and Marital Property in Rabbinic and Sasanian Law," in Catherine Hezser (ed.), *Rabbinic Law in its Roman and Near Eastern Context* (Mohr Siebeck Tübingen 2003) 227-276 esp. p. 259.

cabin, to ensure that their gaze did not contaminate celestial bodies. They had to drink water out of metal or copper (and other lesser-value metal) cups and eat little, so that the evil forces within them do not grow stronger. These miniscule portions were served on a metallic platter, and the woman had to eat wearing gloves and wrapped in a shrouds. Any leftovers were destroyed. After nine days of seclusion, the women underwent a cleansing ritual, and were allowed to return to society. Nevertheless, women participated in Advanced Priestly Studies. [98] The *Hērbedestān* provides us with a religious perspective on the status of women in Sasanian society. According to this text, families had to send a representative to participate in religious studies and learn the sacred rituals. The gender of the appointed delegate was irrelevant, and women were also among those attending classes. [99] After graduation, they were allowed to participate in the holy fire rituals.[100] In this context, women received religious education, which included reading and writing skills, taught as part of general literacy curriculum.[101]

It is important to note that these facilitating changes in legislation only applied to aristocratic women, with regard to matters of inheritance and carrying the family legacy. In other fields, daily life continued to be conducted according to the norms of patron liability, inequality, exclusion of women.

Archeological findings, confirming women's contribution to business and economics under the Sasanians, are stamp seals affiliated with members of royalty, bureaucracy, trade, law, and justice. The bureaucracy of the Sasanian Empire required the use of personal stamp seals. Transactions which involved documents and contracts concerning marriage, divorce, business partnerships, loans, land, trade and the like, all required authentication by stamp seals.[102] Government officials and the countless scribes who took part in various aspects of life, as well as by private persons – men and women alike – all owned such seals. Stamp seals which belonged to women from the social elite and the royal family were found. Some of their owners were independent women who did not need guardians, or who were themselves guardians. The

[98] For a different interpretation excluding women from reaching a high rank in religious studies based on Pahlavi words see Macuch, "Disseminating the Mazdayasnian Religion: An Edition of the Pahlavi Hērbedestān Chapter 5," 266-267 esp. p. 266.
[99] Ibid., 228.
[100] A. Hintze, "Disseminating the Mazdayasnian Religion: An Edition of the Avestan Hērbedestān Chapter 5," in Werner Sundermann, Almut Hintze, and François de Blois,(eds.), *Exegisti Monumenta: Festschrift in Honour of Nicholas Sims-Williams*, (Iranica 17; Wiesbaden 2009) 171-190 esp. p. 171. For a different interpretation see Macuch, "Disseminating the Mazdayasnian Religion," 269-273.
[101] Choksy, *Evil, Good, and Gender*, 88.
[102] Christopher J. Brunner "Sasanian Seals in the Moore Collection: Motive and Meaning in Some Popular Subjects," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 14 (1979) 33-50 esp. p 39.

stamp seal was a symbol of authority in commerce and legal matters. It was a declaration regarding the ability of its owner to carry out commitments inscribed in the contracts she had signed, and to represent herself in court.[103] The stamp seals owned by women reinforce the perception of their financial independence, with or without a guardian, owning property, with or without their husbands, and sometimes acting as heads of families. Some of these women might even have acted as civil servants in administrative positions.[104]

Visually, the stamp seals feature a small selection of illustrations from a traditional iconographic model.[105] The official illustrations reflect a symbolic content repeatedly reproduced.[106] Women's seals are similar to men's and do not display any elements attributed specifically to women, although female busts are displayed on some. Since no seals identified as belonging to men, which had women's portraits on them, were found,[107] we can conclude that all the stamps which have female portraits engraved on them, in fact belonged to women.

Finally, since this study deals with incantation bowls which were designed and written during the Sasanian era, I note that, apart from the standard stamp seals of women, magical seals have also been discovered, which were in fact amulets intended to be worn as jewelry.[108] The writing on those seals is not mirrored, as with regular seals and the iconographic illustrations on them resembles the figures which appear on the base of the incantation bowls.[109] Both seals and bowls were evidently influenced by the same Mesopotamian tradition and design scheme.

2. Jewish Women in the Sasanian Empire

The Sasanian Empire, in which the Jews of Mesopotamia who produced the incantation bowls lived, had significantly influenced Judaism in a number of fields, such as language, lifestyle, intellectual atmosphere, rituals, religious law, and theology.[110] This influence was the result of

[103] Mohadese Malekān, "A Study of the Imagery and Place of Women in the Sasanian Period: Sigillographic Evidence," *Sasanika Archiology* 14 (2013) 1-21.
[104] Ibid., 1.
[105] Rika Gyselen, *Sasanian Seals and Sealings in the A. Saeedi Collection* (Peeters Publishers Leuven 2007) 30.
[106] A. D. H. Bivar, *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum. Stamp seals. II: The Sassanian Dynasty* (London; Trustees of the British Museum 1969) 24.
[107] Frantz Grenet, "Religions du monde iranien ancient, Conférences de l'année 2012-2013," in: *Annuaire de l'École pratique des hautes études (EPHE)*, (Section des sciences religieuses 121, 2014).
[108] Ibid., 17.
[109] Gyselen, *Sasanian Seals and Sealings*, 76.
[110] More about the influence of the Sasanian culture on the rabbis see Yaakov Elman, "Talmud ii. Rabbinic Literature and Middle Persian texts," *Encyclopædia Iranica, online edition* 2017 available at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/talmud-ii**;** Maria Macuch, "Allusions to Sasanian Law in the Babylonian

the many years that the Jews lived under Sasanian rule, during which exilarchs and elite rabbis were integrated into Sasanian aristocracy. The exilarchs, heads of prominent *yeshivas,* and rabbis who belonged to the elite class, were all land, vineyard, date plantation, field, and house-owners. Some employed leaseholders, sharecroppers and other forms of field labor. Jewish scholars used to buy land lots of various sizes, according to their financial state and live on their produce, worked by the laborers they employed. Regarding trade, the Jews dealt in their fields' produce, as we learn from Jewish seal stamps written in the Jewish square script.[111]

Sasanian culture obviously affected various aspects reflected in the legal decision stipulated by the rabbis. We can determine that Jews came into contact with their Sasanian neighbours on a daily basis. The Babylonian Talmud mentions joint or close living arrangements, drinking and eating together, exchanging gifts on holidays, reciprocal social assistance, amongst other shared activities. There is no doubt that this kind of close proximity created an acquaintance with the cultural, social, and religious life of the Sasanian surrounding, including its festivals, customs, and manners. In this context, we note a familiarity with the fields of astrology and astronomy, as well as folk medicine, demonology, and witchcraft.[112]

Regarding Jewish women, we have only the Babylonian Talmud's accounts. It is essential to understand that their existence is thus only revealed through the rabbis' filter, so that their actual voices are never heard. Even when women are mentioned, it is hard to tell whether they are real flesh and blood ones, or were only invented, as part of a theoretical discussion.

Based on rabbinic information a woman who wished to conduct business was subjected to her husband's authority.[113] In order to make transactions involving her own assets, a woman would have needed her husband to sign a waiver of his property rights. Nevertheless, there were Jewish women who owned properties, and managed various businesses on their own. Between the pages of the Babylonian Talmud, we can trace two women who closed a deal which involved

---

Talmud," in Carol Bakhos and Rahim Shayegan (eds.) *The Talmud in its Iranian Context* (Tübingen,: Mohr Siebeck 2010) 100-111**;** Shaul Shaked "No Talking During a Meal: Zoroastrian Themes in the Babylonian Talmud," in ibid., 161-176**;** J. K. Choksy and F. M. Kotwal, "KUSTĪG," *Encyclopaedia Iranica online edition* 2017. available at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kustig **;**Shaul Shaked, "Epigraphica Judaeo-Iranica," in S. Morag et al. (eds.) *Studies in Judaism and Islam Presented to S. D. Goitein*, (Jerusalem; Magnes Press 1981*)* 65-82.

[111] Daniel M. Friedenberg, *Sasanian Jewry and Its Culture: A Lexicon of Jewish and Related Seals*, (Urbana University of Illinois Press 2009).

[112] Ibid., 149.

[113] Shulamit Valler, *Women in Jewish Society in the Talmudic Period* (Hakibbutz Hameuchad 2002) 57-79. (Hebrew).

the acquisition of land by proxy (*bBM* 67a; *bBB* 169b); a woman who leased storage spaces (*bBM* 101b); women pawnbrokers, who were either operating from home or had a pawnshop (*bKet* 85a; *bSan* 31a-31b; *bBM* 36a; *bGit* 35a); and a woman who had a palm plantation (*bBB* 137b). Further evidence of independent women conducting business and even performing land acquisitions without the assistance of a guardian, can be learnt from the financial activity of widows and divorcees. These women claimed their *ketubbah* payment, collected its worth, and bought lands with it (*bKet* 67a). The voices of married women are also embedded between the lines of the talmudic text, providing evidence of their financial involvement. Shulamit Valler studied sources attesting to women's proficiency and professionality in various fields of business management. According to her, they were business proprietors, and their trading skills were not less than those of their male equivalents.[114]

Regarding education, the Babylonian Talmud cites the Mishnah from the Land of Israel, which states in the name of Rabbi Eliezer that "whoever teaches his daughters Torah, it is as though he taught her nonsense" (*mSot* 3:4). In other words, they opposed teaching daughters Torah. This, however, is no indication of reality and many episodes related in the Babylonian Talmud show that women, especially those of rabbinic descent, had a background of education and religious schooling. I will have more to say about women teachers farther down. It seems that women played a more active role in cultural life than that witch rabbinic literature reflects. We have already seen that in the Roman Empire, it was common for parents to home-school their children, and that fathers taught their daughters philosophy, sciences, and medicine. We also encountered women who were synagogue administrators. In the Sasanian Empire, we have seen that Sasanian women received both religious and secular education. Despite the Babylonian Talmud's, attitude toward women's education, there were likely women who were nonetheless home-schooled.[115] The stories told of the daughter of the head of the Sura *yeshiva,* Rav Hisda, shows that this woman had enjoyed home-schooling in Babylonia. The questions she presents to her father are answered in a manner that presumes previous knowledge and a broad education (*bEruv* 65a). In a scholarly dialogue between the daughter of Rav Hisda and her husband, Rava, who was head of the *yeshiva* in Mahoza, the matter at hand is *Kashrut* of meat. The talmudic discussion is based on a high level of expertise. At the end of the discussion, the editor states explicitly that "the daughter of Rav Hisda is different; as he was certain about her that she was

[114] Ibid., 187.
[115] Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (University of California Press 1993) 196.

an expert" (*bHag* 5a). In addition to demonstrating knowledge in theoretical matters, she seems to have also given her husband, a judge advice in legal matters. (*bKet* 85a).

Another source of knowledge regarding women's reading skills is the discussion of women being called up to the reading of the Torah (עלייה לתורה). Although this is presented as a source from Eretz Israel, it is found only in the Babylonian Talmud. Here we find that the sages say: "a woman should not read the Torah, out of respect for the congregation" (*bMeg* 23a). This means that women were not allowed to read the Torah publicly, on gender grounds, but they could and did read it elsewhere. Given this evidence, I conclude that there were also Jewish women in Babylonia who mastered the art of reading.

The Babylonian Talmud offers a very limited glimpse into the lives of daughters and wives of rabbis who received a broad education. An exception is Yalta, who is mentioned seven times in the Babylonian Talmud. She demonstrates knowledge and proficiency in halakhic matters. One source may suggest that she gave public lectures on matters of Torah.[116] Beruriah, a woman from the Land of Israel, is described only in the Babylonian Talmud as studying 300 *halakhot* in one day (*bPes* 62b).

The Jewish women we have met so far lived in a literate society that appreciated a certain kind of scholarly erudition. I argue that Jewish women must have played an active role in that world. Using scraps of information which managed to escape the hand of censorship, we can weave a picture, in which many women of the Jewish community, and particularly of its elite – were educated and were able to read and write.

The Babylonian Talmud provides a few clear indications that women actually wrote. A ruling in *bGittin* and *bMenahot* states that anyone who is included in the mitzva of binding *Tefillin* (phylacteries), i.e. every man, may also write it (*bMen* 42b). Because women are excluded from binding *Tefillin*, they are disqualified as their scribes. The premise of the saying implies that women were indeed capable of writing, although it was forbidden to them. The disqualification of women on the grounds of binding *Tefillin* is extended to writing of Torah scrolls and *mezuzot*. The writing of a divorce document, on the other hand, is not only possible, but also officially permitted by the Mishnah: "All are qualified to write a divorce document, even a deaf-mute, an imbecil and a minor. A woman may write her own bill of divorce, and the husband his receipt,

[116] Tamara Or, *Massekhet Betsah: Text, Translation, and Commentary - Feminist Commentary on the Babylonian Talmud* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2010) 119-134.

because the affirmation of divorce documents depends solely on the signers" (*mGit* 2:5) and this ruling is affirmed in the Babylonian Talmud.[117]

I suggest a different reading of the prohibition on writing Torah scrolls, *tefillin* and *mezuzut*. From a capitalist perspective (which existed without a doubt in those times, even though it had not yet been named), of control and power struggles, we can deduce that products like Teffilin and Torah scrolls or services such as writing them were invalidated and banned precisely because they are supplied by women. I believe this is evidence of a reality in which men and women were competing in the same field of occupation. The rabbis, and all those who supplied products that required literacy, attempted to monopolize the market and prevent free competition over potential clientele. Teaching is one example of an occupation in which women were discriminated. The Mishnah stipulates that a woman is prohibited from teaching scribes (*mQid* 4:13), and the Babylonian Talmud accepts this ruling without question. Tal Ilan argues that this statement is quite puzzling, unless we assume that women were teaching the skills of reading and writing in the first place. If they were unable to do so anyway, why was such a ruling necessary?[118] It might be a hidden clue to the fact that in the Jewish community there were women who worked as scribes. The Babylonian Talmud's discussion of the Mishnah that prohibits women's teaching scribes actually helps in validating this hypothesis. It describes a meeting between the teacher and the fathers of the suckling infants whom she is instructing (*bQid* 82a). The Babylonian Talmud makes the pupil in this case a "suckling infant" (ינוקא), thereby diminishing the woman's status as a teacher, in significantly reducing the level of general and biblical knowledge required to teach chidren at such a level. Yet, despite the lower status to which the teacher was demoted in this tradition, it seems to reflect a situation where the woman possesses all the necessary teaching skills. It is also possible that professions that had to do with writing were deemed of a lower social value. We will later see the competition between rabbis and sorcerous women within the magical cosmos and its various products, including the incantation bowls.

[117] It is possible that this is also a reference to a tradition, evidence for which was discovered in the Judean Desert in Israel, according to which a woman may give the man the divorce document. See Tal Ilan, "On a Newly Published Divorce Bill from the Judaean Desert" *The Harvard Theological Review 89/2* (1996) 195-202. Such a tradition would fit the texts of the incantation bowls, describing women who issue divorce documents, both for a male Lilith, and for a female one.

[118] Ilan, *Mine and Yours are Hers*, 166.

An additional source may be added to the corpus of Jewish women who wrote for a living – the Jewish woman Em. This woman is mentioned 27 times in the Babylonian Talmud by Abaye, always in the context of medicine. Being a legal corpus, the Babylonian Talmud only seldom includes medical information, and those are randomly scattered among its pages. Physicians mentioned by name in it are rare. One of the very few exceptions is the case of Em. Abaye uses a fixed formula whenever he mentions her name: "Em said to me" (אמרה לי אם). This unique formulation informs us about the authoritative power of this woman. In rabbinic literature chains of authority are constructed in order to give more force to the knowledge that is being passed from a teacher – a rabbi, an authority figure – to the next generation. The chain of traditions creates an accumulated communal exegesis. Abaye's "Em said to me" is different from the usual "Rav X said in the name of Rav Y" formulation, and yet it echoes the voice of an authority figure such as a rabbi, or in this case a female professional teacher.[119]

The general consensus in scholarly research is that Em was the foster and/or adoptive and/or nursing mother of Abaye, but this is apparently false. Tal Ilan has shown that the Babylonian Talmud itself uses a term that suggests that Em was actually a professional teacher and educator – "מרבינתיה" (*bKid* 31b).[120] This (like we saw above) is again a case of a profession that is being translated differently in different gender contexts – like a physician becoming a midwife.[121] The same phenomenon exists here in the scholarship of the Talmud. The male profession מרבינא is translated as a teacher and educator when it describes a man, while מרבינתא the female form of the same term is translated as "nanny."[122] If, however, we simply translate the term literally, it is quite likely that Em was Abaye's teacher, who instructed him in pharmacology, or, alternatively, they studied pharmacology together.[123]

Ilan also notes that the woman who is referred to as Em (i.e. mother) is not actually an adoptive mother or nursing. Em was not a nickname, but rather a very popular personal name for Jewish women in Sasanian Babylonia. The derivatives of the name Em –אמי, אמא, אימי , – appear on incantation bowls again and again,[124] and the name Em itself appears once as a part of an

[119] Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity: Rabbinic and Christian Reconstructions of Biblical Gender* (Stanford University Press 2002) 153.
[120] Tal Ilan, "Salome's Medicinal Recipe and Jewish Women Doctors in Antiquity," forthcoming.
[121] Holt N. Parker, "*Women doctors in Greece, Rome, and the Byzantine Empire,"* in Lilian R. Furst (ed.) *Women Physicians and Healers: Climbing a Long Hill* (University Press of Kentucky 1997). 131-151 esp. pp. 140-146.
[122] Ilan, "Salome's Medicinal Recipe and Jewish Women Doctors in Antiquity," forthcoming.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Tal Ilan, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity*, Part IV, (Tübingen Mohr Siebeck 2011). 47.

incantation written on a jag – Hakham son of Em (חכם בר אם).[125] Judging from the qualities of Em's traditions that Abaye transmits, she seems to have been, inter alia, an expert in potions and medicines, as well as in other means of treating illnesses.[126]

The following are some of the topics in which Em excelled. She was a specialist in treating babies. Between the abundance of tips she is remembered for, is the correct manner of bandaging a circumcision wound, and the treatment of a baby who is not breathing properly, or has trouble suckling (*bShab* 134a). Em was a specialist in the treatment of children. She knows a potion which heals children stung by scorpions (*bKet* 50a), as well as a prescription for a child's earache (*bAZ* 28b). With regard to adults, she offers treatments for heart conditions and digestive problems (*bEruv* 29b). She diagnoses diseases and recommends physical as well as psychological treatments (*bGit* 67b). The variety of Em's prescriptions suggests that she was a physician with an extremely broad medical knowledge. In reply to any doubts that might arise, I bring an example which requires knowledge in surgery. The treatment given in the name of Em is an operation intended to open the blockage of a baby's anus (*bShab* 134a). Em's instruction is to perform a warp and weft incision to prevent the tissue from reattaching. In addition to surgery instructions, she recommends avoiding conventional surgical equipment. We know today that this is due to the fact that these tools were made of iron, which could cause infection. Instead, Em suggests using barley (שערתא).

In my opinion, Em's recipes and treatments recorded in the Babylonian Talmud are based on written instructions put down by Em herself, much like the writings of woman physicians whose prescriptions were published in Galen's book and Paul Aegineta's medical encyclopedia. Physicians in antiquity concocted their own medicine, and it is likely that Em was no different. The knowledge she demonstrates, and her pedagogical formulations, reflect connections to Greek-Roman medicine and gynecology.[127] Nevertheless, there is also more evidence for a Mesopotamian influence on Talmudic medicine in general, [128] and on Em's healing methods and medicines in particular.

[125] Émile Puech, Magical Jug in Babylonian Aramaic, *Semitica et Classica* International Journal of Oriental and Mediterranean Studies 5 (2012) 249-259 esp. p. 249. (French)
[126] More about Em see Fonrobert, *Menstrual purity*, 128-160.
[127] Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity*, 155.
[128] Markham J. Geller, "Akkadian Healing Therapies in the Babylonian Talmud," *Max Planck Institute for the History of Science* (2004)1-60.

Of further note is Em's familiarity with the magical cosmos. If required, depending on the patient, she could also recruit this kind of knowledge – as I will show later on.

I personally believe that a woman like Em, who possesses medical and magical knowledge, who mastered insights into a person's soul as well as the art or writing might have been one of the authors of incantation bowls. However, since research is not based on hunches, I need to wait for new evidence about Em's formulae to surface on incantation bowls, perhaps in the keenly awaited publication of new bowls.

Chapter 3
The Mesopotamian Magical Cosmos – Women as Priestesses, Exorcists, Authors.

Mesopotamian poets describe the ideal woman as having the following traits: she should arouse pleasure and passion. She should have a sense of humor. She should be kind and attentive, attention which should also be paid to the needs of other women around her. The ideal woman is proud but gentle; intelligent and ambitious, but at the same time supportive of the man who chose her as his partner. With regard to the looks of this incredible woman, her eyes shine, her lips burn in red, her hair flows with curls, and her skin is smooth. She is beautiful, tall, and seductive. She is well mannered, educated, and possesses feminine traits as a healer, nourisher, and confidant. She is strong and courageous, and performs well in running the household.[129]

In this chapter, our search for evidence of Mesopotamian women who existed outside of poems, goes back even further in time than this poem, to the period between the third millennium B.C.E. and year 100 C.E. It is important to notice that Mesopotamian culture whose three-millennia-long image has come down to us through clay tablets inscribed with cuneiform characters, which were standardized, edited, and continuously copied, was still alive while the phenomenon of the incantation bowls appeared in the area. The more we know about the magic Mesopotamian cosmos, the easier it is to identify the environmental impact of its elements on the incantation bowls. The more we know about women who were part of Mesopotamian culture, and used the art of writing, the closer we are to understanding the women who wrote the incantation bowls.

The best place to begin such a search for these women, in particular those who could write, would be the cuneiform tablets, which document the essence of the Mesopotamian magical cosmos and its various rituals which were present in all aspects of life.

1. Women in Mesopotamian Rituals

Since none of the cuneiform texts were explicitly dedicated to women in the Mesopotamian magical cosmos, to find them we have to delve into the entire corpus of cuneiform tablets, which were written in Akkadian. Women are only rarely mentioned in texts addressed to men.

[129] Benjamin R. Foster, "The Person in Mesopotamian Thought," in Karen Radner and Eleanor Robson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture* (Oxford University Press 2011) 117-139 esp. p. 121.

When they are, their mention usually touches on illnesses and sufferings of the opposite gender. We can still use these scattered comments and dicta to reconstruct the outlines of Mesopotamian women. We will try to fill in the outlines of this womanly figure with rituals concerning labor, gynecology, and babies, as well as with fortune telling, signs and omens. Other genres in which women should be sought are instructional texts, letters, contracts, and lists documenting the administrative workings of palaces and temples. Our hypothesis is that we would find at least a few references to the involvement of women in the magical cosmos in these texts. We are again looking for women who wrote, and especially those whose profession it was.

In the first chapter, we attempted to construct a list of authors whose names were deleted from the pages of history. This task is going to be much harder in this chapter, due to the nature of the Mesopotamian documentation concept. Mesopotamian culture did not elevate the individual, which is why neither the name of the patient nor that of the healer appears in the formula, and the authors would use a general, all-inclusive form of writing.[130] We can therefore expect that the information we gather would teach us more about the magical cosmos and its terminology, than it would about the women who lived in it.

1.1 *Women's Presence in Texts Addressed to Men*

The people of Mesopotamia began to express interest in celestial bodies around the second millennium B.C.E. They meticulously recorded their observations, creating a body of very accurate information. The premise of fortune telling in Mesopotamia was that the Gods were transmitting different kinds of useful information to humans, through omens that reveal things-to-come or answer existential questions. The general concept of predicting the future was based on the idea that two consecutive events were causally related. Numerous databases of ominous events were recorded in various genres, related to different areas of life. Every event in the celestial realm could become an object of inquiry: the stars and meteors, sun or moon eclipses, the weather, or the calendar. Every element on earth was also closely inspected: plants, inanimate objects, and water bodies; the shapes made by oil on flour or water; the behaviour of

[130] The particular case (name, place, personal characteristics) was converted from an individual case into a general phenomenon. Mesopotamian healers made lexical lists of diseases and symptoms, and created a collection of medical texts, that teach us about diseases, symptoms, and human anatomy from a scientific perspective. For more see J. Cale Johnson, "Depersonalized Case Histories in the Babylonian Therapeutic Compendia," in J. Cale Johnson (ed.), *In the Wake of the Compendia: Infrastructural Contexts and the Licensing of Empiricism in Ancient and Medieval Mesopotamia* (Berlin De Gruyter 2015) 289-316.

animals and the patterns in the flight of birds; unnatural births; internal organs of sacrificial animals; and human behavior in states of sleep or wakefulness.[131]

Between the thousands of tablets describing omens which affect people, there is only a tiny fraction referring to women in everyday life. In some cases, like the first of the following, the omen is fatal in nature.

- "If women in a city have beards, hardship will afflict that city."[132]
- "If a woman catches a snake unaware in the base course of masonry and cuts it in two, that woman will be lucky."[133]
- "If a house's doorway opens towards its front, the man's wife will cause her spouse trouble."[134]
- "If a man opens a well in Du'uzu, his wife [will die]."[135]

A convenient method for searching for these women is "The Diagnostic and Prognostic Handbook", a useful guide organized by subjects.[136] The book was written in the 2nd millennium B.C.E. and copied over and over again until 100 C.E. It comprises of six parts:

Part 1- a collection of predictive signs that the exorcist, *Āšipu*, sees on the way to the patient.

Part 2- a collection of diseases and treatments organized by an anatomical code, from head to toe.

Part 3- a collection of diseases and treatments organized by code of time and celestial bodies.

Part 4- a collection of diseases and neurological treatments.

Part 5- a collection of treatments of infectious diseases.

Part 6- a collection of disease and treatments related to gynecology, childbirth and miscarriage, and pediatric diseases.

The handbook mostly addresses diseases, sufferings, and rituals intended for men. Before we talk about the sixth part, dedicated to women, let us try to gather some information from the first five chapters, and examine the context and circumstances in which women are being mentioned.

---

[131] Jean Bottéro, *Ancestor of the West: Writing, Reasoning, and Religion in Mesopotamia* (University of Chicago Press 1995) 124-125.

[132] Text Šumma Ālu ina Mēlê Šakin 1:153 Sally Freedman, *If a City Is Set on a Height: The Akkadian Omen Series Šumma Alu ina Mele Šakin, vol.3; Tablets 41-63* (Eisenbrauns 2017) 37.

[133] Text BM 129092: 18-19, Sally Freedman, "BM 129092: A Commentary on Snake Omens" in Ann K. Guinan et al. (eds.) *If a Man Builds a Joyful House: Assyriological Studies in Honor of Erle Verdun Leichty*, (Leiden Brill 2006) 183**;** A parallel story about the snake in the wall appears in the Babylonian Talmud (*bShab* 156b)

[134] Text Šumma Ālu ina Mēlê Šakin 5:75 Freedman, *If a City Is Set on a Height*, 95.

[135] Text ibid., 17: 37 ibid., 257.

[136] JoAnn Scurlock, *Sourcebook for Ancient Mesopotamian Medicine* (Society of Biblical Literature 2014) 8-10.

- **The woman as a patient** – a reminder about diseases that might also attack women is set by an added comment "man or woman". Some medical texts note a different dosage of the ingredients in the prescription for women and men. For example:

  "If his insides, his hands and his feet are continually cramped (and he has been sick for) thirty-two days, **either a man or a woman.**"[137]

- **The woman as the symptom –** a relationship with a woman or the lack thereof is one example for a symptom of the disease.

  "If the top of his head continually feels as if split in two, his stomach is continually nauseous, (and) **like one who lays himself down on top of a woman**, he has an erection, "**hand**" of ardat lilî."[138]

It should be noted that the "hand" that appears in the magic formulae, is not identified in terms of the function it serves. Rather, the "hand" is of a supernatural entity that sent the disease, a symptom, or the name of the disease.[139]

- **The woman as the cause of a disease** – through having intercourse with a woman or coming in contact with her blood (in this case, post-natal blood). For example:

  "If blood drips from his penis, "hand of Shamash" on account of **sexual intercourse with a woman**; he will die."[140]

- **The woman as an ingredient in the medicine/amulet** – menstrual blood indirectly plays a role, as one of the ingredients used in the concoction, together with dust taken from underneath the place where a post-menopausal woman was standing. Here is an example:

  "… you take dust from shade and sunlight. You grind (it and) plaster from doorposts, dust from the front threshold, **dust from below a post-menopausal woman**, dust from a tomb (and) samīdu (and) mix (it) with pūru oil…"[141]

- **The woman as a participant in a ritual** – in her presence, or by creating one of the artefacts herself (weaving red wool). Here is an example:

[137] Text .DPS13: 127 ibid., 115.
[138] Text DPS3: 12 ibid., 19.
[139] For more about the "hand" see Nils P. Heeßel, "The Hands of the Gods: Disease Names, and Divine Anger" in Irving L. Finkel and Markham J. Geller (eds.), *Disease in Babylonia* (Cuneiform Monographs 36; Leiden Brill 2007) 120-130 esp. p. 125.
[140] Scurlock, *Sourcebook for Ancient Mesopotamian Medicine*, 131.
[141] Text BM42272: 54-55 ibid., 416.

> "You make a (miniature) bow from a spear point or needle… If **you place it at the head of the man and woman while they are sleeping**, things should go back to normal."[142]

So far, we have seen that women only get mentioned in very few of the hundreds of medical texts which were written with men in mind. Three common denominators come up repeatedly:

- There are diseases that affect men and women alike (e.g. muscle aches, neurological diseases).
- The diseases under which women are mentioned involve "hand" elements, and elements of impurity.
- The entities which appear in the same context with the women are affiliated with either the female or male Lilith, or with Ishtar (I will discuss these three entities later on).

1.2 *Childbirth and Gynecology*

Usually, when things went smoothly, midwives were responsible for everything that had to do with childbirth. Only a few words are dedicated to normal, natural birth procedures in the cuneiform texts. These were assisted by a midwife – *šabsūtu* or *qadištu* – or by a "holy woman". Shortly before the delivery, the midwife would cover her head, say a blessing, and massage the woman's loins.[143] She would then use flour to draw a magic circle, and place an unbaked brick in the middle. The delivery area would apparently be inside the magic circle, and the baby would be born on the brick or right next to it. The umbilical cord and placenta were placed on top of the brick for 7-9 days after the delivery, as an offering to the Goddess of childbirth. The umbilical cord and the placenta, along with the blood-soaked brick, were buried for protection against *Kūbu* – a demonic incarnation of the spirit of a stillborn child.[144] In cases of miscarriage or complications during delivery, a physician would be called in. In most cases, an exorcist, *āšipu*, would arrive to treat the woman in labor. Such cases, including their diagnosis, prognosis and ritualistic treatment, are described in the sixth part of "The Diagnostic and Prognostic Handbook".[145]

---

[142] Text BAM272: 5-6 ibid., 549.
[143] Joann Scurlock, "Baby-Snatching Demons, Restless Souls and the Dangers of Childbirth: Magico-Medical Means of Dealing with Some of the Perils of Motherhood in Ancient Mesopotamia," *Incognita* 2 (1991) 137-185 esp. p. 142.
[144] Ibid., 152
[145] More about Gynecology in 'The Diagnostic and Prognostic Series' see Scurlock, *Sourcebook for Ancient Mesopotamian Medicine* 245-253.

Below is an example of a childbirth-related ritual which reflects the perception of life in the magical cosmos. This ritual is a treatment method for a parturient suffering from excessive bleeding. She would receive a 4-day treatment by the *āšipu*, which included healing through medicine, rubbing ointments, massage, ligation, spells, protection through an amulet, and purification.[146] The following are some examples:

- **Ointment** – the *āšipu* concocted ointment out of medicinal plants, and rubbed it on the parturient's naval and labia.

  "For irregular bleeding, you grind together these twenty plants: kalû-mineral, kalgukku-mineral, alum, magnetic hematite, silver, gold, black anzaḫḫu-fruit and tongue of a field mouse. You mix it with honey, ghee and calf fat. You recite the recitation three times over it and then you rub (it) gently on her umbilical area..." [147]
- **Stone amulet for the parturient** – the *āšipu* created an amulet from stones woven into a string of red wool, which would then be wrapped around the woman's thighs.

  "You thread these nine stones… on red-dyed wool, lapis wool, carded wool, tendons from a dead cow… and da'mātu-clay which you have twined together. You tie seven and seven knots..." [148]
- **An amulet for protection of the house** – the *āšipu* created an amulet and hanged it behind the door.

  "You take an upstanding potsherd from a crossroads. You wash it with water, rub it with oil and wrap it in red-dyed wool. You put it in the house, behind the door in an isolated place..." [149]
- **Prayer** – the parturient was kneeling and praying, while the *āšipu* gave her an alcoholic potion to drink.

  "You recite the recitation three times. She utters a *šegû* prayer three times… you put out *mersu*-confection made with honey and ghee. You pour out a libation. Then, she prostrates herself. You keep doing this for three days."[150]
- **Purification** – the *āšipu* spread hot coal around the house and prayed, while the parturient repeatedly chanted a prayer to Ishtar.

[146] More about irregular bleeding see ibid., 571-578**;** Joann Scurlock, "Medicine and Healing Magic," in Mark W. Chavalas (ed.), *Women in the Ancient Near East* (Routledge, 2014) 101-143.
[147] Text BAM237 i: 1′-3′ Scurlock, *Sourcebook for Ancient Mesopotamian Medicine*, 578.
[148] Text BAM237 i: 4-8 ibid.
[149] Text BAM237 i: 9-10 ibid.
[150] Text BAM237 i: 11-13 ibid.

"On the fourth day, you scatter *sīḫu*-wormwood, *argannu* and *barirātu* before the door. That woman utters a *šegû* prayer before the door. She utters a *šegû* prayer before Ishtar. If you recite the recitation three times, she should get well."[151]

Treatment of complications during delivery included medical procedures such as massage and ointment application, combined with prayers and magic spells. The essential resemblance of the solution for complications during child delivery to exorcism in the case of a spirit or demon, should be noted. The command given is "Fly away! Run away! Disappear! This command appears in other rituals, and in the magic formula written on the incantation bowls.

"The Diagnostic and Prognostic Handbook" recommends five kinds of means to prevent miscarriage:

- **Inserting substances into the vagina** – metallic hematite is ground and wrapped in wool in the shape of a tampon.
  "[If ..] her vein(s) [let flow] bright red (blood) […] you grind magnetic hematite (and) wrap (it) in a tuft of wool. If you insert it into her vagina her blood should stop."[152]
- **Concocting an ointment** – minerals in black and white colors were ground and applied to the head of the woman, her pelvis, and her heart.
  " If (you want) sorcery not to approach a pregnant woman, for her not to have a miscarriage, you grind magnetite, *guḫlu*-antimony, dust, *šubû*stone (and) dried "fox grape." You mix (it) with the blood of a male shelduck (and) cypress oil and, if you rub (it) on her heart, her hypogastric region and her (vulva's) "head," sorcery will not approach her."[153]
- **Clay burial** – a broken piece of pottery found at a crossroads was taken and buried under the threshold of the house from inside. It seems that this tradition, involving pottery and burial, evolved over time into the burial of clay figurines, and later into the burial of the clay incantation bowls.
  "you take a potsherd (found) standing on its edge at a crossroads and, if you bury (it) in the inner threshold, sorcery will be kept at bay."[154]

[151] Text BAM237 i: 14-16 ibid.
[152] Text BAM235: 1-3 ibid., 587.
[153] Text SpTU3.84: 56-78 ibid., 589.
[154] Text SpTU3.84: 58 ibid.

- **Exchange of fortunes** – against the dangers of miscarriage and of delivery complications to the parturient she was replaced with healthy plant.

  "You gather a shoot. You pour it out below an *ašāgu*-thorn which has sprouted on brickwork and you say as follows: **You have received your gift. Give me the plant of life so that the foetus of so and so daughter of so and so may come out straight away**. You say this, and then you pull out its root and its crown without looking behind you or speaking to anyone whatsoever. You spin it into a band and tie it. If you bind it on her left thigh, she should recover."[155]

- **Creation of a figurine** – figurines acted as a substitute for the parturient. Any manipulation executed on a figurine was intended to relieve the parturient and pass the disease from her to the figurine. This concept of passing a disease, a demon, or a spirit onto a figurine was also common in many other Mesopotamians rituals.

  "At noon, you put *šigūšu*-grain at the crossroads and then you hang it from a window and then the pregnant woman rubs her womb and breast with it. Then, on the day of her labor pains, a girl grinds it and then they make it into dough with the water of her labor pains and then you make a figurine of a man or you make a figurine of a woman. You go indoors until midnight. At midnight, you throw it into the street. She then enters her house." [156]

2. The Essence of the Magical Act

Since we are dealing with magical activities, I would like to take a methodical break at this point, to discuss three tools which might help us better understand the Mesopotamian magical cosmos, as well as the magical world reflected in the incantation bowls. Our point of view in this research regarding Jewish and Mesopotamian magic, uses the definition of this field as a set of beliefs and practices which aim to change reality,[157] within a culture-dependent context.

In the magical cosmos, there are three forces that have the potential of changing reality; the first two are:

- **Sympathetic magic** – magic reflected in acts based on similarity, where like produces like.

[155] YOS XI 86 Iv: 31-38 ibid., 604.
[156] Text SpTU 5 no. 248 iv: 41-42 ibid., 691; For more about miscarriage see: Scurlock, "Medicine and Healing Magic," 121-128.
[157] For such perspectives on Jewish magic see Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 8-69.

- **Contagion magic** – magic reflected in acts based on contact, where a part continues to affect the whole.

James George Frazer coined these two terms as the two forces fueling magic.[158] In his book, "The Golden Bough," Frazer writes:

> "If we analyse the principles of thought on which magic is based, they will probably be found to resolve themselves into two: first, that like produces like, or that an effect resembles its cause; and, second, that things which have once been in contact with each other continue to act on each other at a distance after the physical contact has been severed. The former principle may be called the Law of Similarity, the latter the Law of Contact or Contagion. From the first of these principles, namely the Law of Similarity, the magician infers that he can produce any effect he desires merely by imitating it: from the second he infers that whatever he does to a material object will affect equally the person with whom the object was once in contact, whether it formed part of his body or not." [159]

These two magical principles were present in every aspect of life in Mesopotamia and show up in most of the spells and rituals of the region.

2.1 *Sympathetic Magic*

Sympathetic Magic is an act of magic performed on an object which affects an essence that is similar to it. In the ritual performed on parturients suffering from excessive bleeding, which we have just discussed, the magical act is based on an element of binding. An analogy is created between the ties made in the string, and the complications of the delivery, so that the magical concept behind this act is that just as the ties of the string are untied, so too the complication of the delivery are resolved, and the path is cleared for the women to deliver her baby.

A variety of Mesopotamian rituals were based on this element of similarity, in creating figurines that represented demons, spirits, witches, and witchcraft. Different manipulations were carried

[158] I must point out that I am aware of the scholarly critique in the disciplines of anthropology and religious studies, levelled against Frazer's Victorian racist interpretation of religions, which he refers to as "primitive," and I agree with this critique and discard his application of Darwinism in the hierarchical, evolutionary analysis of the intellectual, anthropological, and psychological "advancement" of society and mankind. I do, however, see value in the terms coined by Frazer in the field of magic: "sympathetic magic" and "contagion magic", and think they are useful for my analysis of the magic act expressed through the spells and rituals which appear on the incantation bowls.

[159] James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study of Magic and Religion* (The Macmillan company 1951) 12-51.

out on the figurines, which would create a connection between different entities in reality. The act of the sympathetic magic through a figurine was common in rituals against witchcraft and witches. Manipulations to the figurine, helped gain control of the witch in real life, sending the curse put by her back in her direction.[160] We can find parts of this sort of ritual in some formulae of the incantation bowls, such as in the case of Gušnazdukht Daughter of Aḥat, which will be discussed below. Syllables and sounds which are unidentifiable and meaningless (at least to us), were used based on imitation, and are a symbol of a culture-dependent phenomenon which was known within the social circles of magic users and practitioners. These "noises" and onomatopoetic sounds, incorporated as phonetic effects,[161] created control and the ability to drive out demons, spirits, and various diseases. We find many inexplicable words written on the incantation bowls, referred to in the discipline as *Nomina Barbara*. A person's name was also considered to be a vital part of that person's essence and existence. The name actually contained the person's entire fate, and therefore attempts were made to discover all a person's names, and any nickname associated with him/her. Knowing the name of the supernatural entity causing the person misery was the key to gaining control over it.[162] We encounter this phenomenon of magic formula, listing a chain of names, nicknames, and attributes of the entity being driven away, in the incantation bowls, often in the context of the exorcism of the Demoness Lilith.

2.2 *Contagion Magic*

This form of magic is performed through control over physical matter, where the part represents the whole. Hair, nails, mucus, or pieces of clothes, which represent the person from whom they were taken, continue to have an effect on him/her even when they are detached. As we saw in the ritual performed on the parturient experiencing complications, the *āšipu* creates a figurine in which one of the ingredients was amniotic fluid. This representation of the parturient is signified by the magical transference of the disease onto the figurine, acting as a substitute for the parturient. As soon as the figurine was thrown out into the streets, the disease was abolished, and the parturient recovered.

Contagion magic was considered an illegal form of magic in most cases, and was performed secretly by witches who manipulated substances that the victim had unknowingly ingested with

[160] Text THeth23: 121-122 Scurlock, *Sourcebook for Ancient Mesopotamian Medicine* 52. More about figurines see ibid., 49-56.
[161] Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (The Free Press, Illinois 1948) 54.
[162] F. A. M. Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits theRritual Texts* (Groningen Siyx publications 1992) 46-53.

food or drink.[163] It is important to note that the witch was the one being accused of this act of magic, and this gendered reference is explicit. She was mostly accused of illegal contagion magic, rather than of sympathetic magic, which was perceived as a legitimate healing method. While the former was allegedly damaging and always performed by witches, the latter was therapeutic and performed by the male healer, the *āšipu*.

2.3 *Magic of Exchange of Fortunes*

I would like to suggest a third force of magic to the two that defined by Frazer – the power of **exchange of fortunes**. I believe that this concept of magic perfectly reflects the essence of the perception of magic in Mesopotamia. This applies to the incantation bowls in particular, and is very dominant in the curse bowl genre, as we shall see later on.

According to the Mesopotamian perception, *Šīmtu* – fate, or fortune – is reflected in everyone's personal experience as well as in the social and cosmic one. This term should not be confused with what nowadays falls under the definition of fortune in western society.[164] Rather, we should think about a verdict set by the gods regarding a person, an animal, a plant, or any other being, which determines the path of events – the fate, or the sum of fortunes for that being, on earth and beyond. This idea of fate is therefore an important principle in the cosmic order. In a cosmos in which many signs and omens allow a glimpse into the future, fate is part of a scheme of phenomena in a semi-deterministic world. This is a world in which omens are inevitable, but the events indicated by them can be changed in reality through the use of magical tools. The notion that future events are not yet determined, and can be diverted or changed, creating an improved reality through spells and rituals, creates the belief that fate is not a causal concept, and that it is changeable and fluid, rather than fixed and solid.[165] Since fate can be changed, singular fortunes can also be exchanged one for the other – the fortune designated for one person in exchange of that of another person, or the fortune of a person in exchange of that of an animal, plant, a spirit, or an inanimate object.

Below are a few examples from texts used in magic rituals, which reflect the idea of exchange of fortunes in cases of women.

- Ritual against difficulties in labor – exchange of fortunes with a sheep.

[163] Tzvi Abusch and Daniel Schwemer, *Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Rituals* (Leiden, Brill 2011) 1.
[164] Francesca Rochberg, *In the Path of the Moon* (Leiden Brill, 2010) 24.
[165] Ibid., 30.

"May the pregnant ewe of *Šakkan* and *Dumuzi* receive my pregnancy from me and give me her pregnancy. May she receive from me (my) inability to give birth right away and give me her ability to give birth right away"[166]

- Ritual against miscarriage – exchange of fortunes with a she-ass.
  "May what is within you die so that what is within me may live." [167]
- Spell inducing the birth of a male baby – exchange of fortunes with pottery fired in a kiln. "Give me your things which are well formed and so take away [from me] the things which are not well formed." [168]
- Ritual of picking medicinal plants."You have received the present intended for you, now give me the plant of life." [169]

In this context, I would like to discuss the ritual of "finding a substitute for a king" – *Šar pūhi*.[170] The name of this ritual symbolizes the idea of exchange of fortunes, in its most aggressive and absolute form. A bad omen revealed during a lunar eclipse meant that a temporary, flesh-and-blood substitute for the king needed to be found.[171] *Esarhaddon*, king of Akkad (681-669 B.C.), was involved in exchange on several occasions, when lunar eclipses were hinting that his life was in danger.[172] This astronomical phenomenon was interpreted as the victory of the demons over the god of the moon, who was the protector of the king, thereby disrupting the cosmic order. In terms of magical acts, there was nothing that could be done to change the predictive omens regarding the king. However, the individual fortunes of the "players" could be switched. This course of action held the potential in store of turning over the events which were predicted for the king. The prophecy would indeed come true, but it would affect the substitute king. During the "sensitive" period of time, the king himself was not allowed to leave the palace or make any public appearances, and he was referred to as *ikkaru* – peasant, to conceal any connection to royalty. The substitute king would wear the real king's clothes and sleep in his bed (a form of contagion magic). When this dangerous time period was

[166] Text 1: BAM 542 iii: 14-17 Scurlock, *Sourcebook for Ancient Mesopotamian Medicine*, 690.
[167] Text 1: BAM 542 iii Rev. :36'. Ibid., 691.
[168] Text 4R2 55 no. 1: 5–9 Ibid., 117.
[169] Text AMT 67,1 iv: 27 Erica Reiner, "Astral Magic in Babylonia," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 85 (1995) 1-150 esp. p. 6.
[170] Michaël Guichard and Marti Lionel, "Purity in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Paleo-Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian Periods," in Christian Frevel and Christophe Nihan (eds.), *Purity and the Forming of Religious Traditions in the Ancient Mediterranean World and Ancient Judaism* (Leiden Brill 2013) 47-114 esp. pp.102-105.
[171] Ibid., 57.
[172] Jean Bottéro, *Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods*, 143.

over, which lasted anywhere between two weeks and three months, the substitute king was executed and buried in a royal ceremony.[173] After the funeral, the real king went back to his throne, and numerous purification rituals were performed on him, the palace, and the kingdom. All of the objects used by the substitute king, such as clothes, sword, sceptre, and crown, were burnt and replaced with new ones.[174]

Magic of exchange of fortunes reflects the attempt to maintain or restore balance, stability, and the static state of the cosmic order, a recurring element in Mesopotamian culture. In terms of physics, the state of this system could be defined as a "stable equilibrium," meaning that when there is slight movement on one side of the equilibrium point, a counter reaction is triggered to balance it, restoring the original state. The idea of equilibrium within the magical cosmos is reflected in the forces which are involved in the rituals. *Šīmtu*, fortunes were also part of the cosmic order.[175] Changing the state of a person, their purification, exorcism, driving evil spirits away from their house or their body, and their healing, were not the end of this process. In order to maintain the cosmic state of equilibrium, the disease that left one body, had to move into another, and vice versa – the good fortune in the other body had to move into the first body and fill the void created in it.

3. The Witch

The texts used in the Mesopotamian rituals against witchcraft are not directed at individuals, but at a stereotype of one accused of witchcraft. The phrasing of the spells themselves also refers to pairs of warlock and witch, or "male and female adversary." That is, the accusations against the witch are not direct. The patient chants a text, declaring that there is no way of knowing the gender of the person who cast the spell on them – "be it a man or be it a woman, be it a living or a dead person." [176] Parallel to the chanting of the spell, the ritual act is performed, involving a number of male and female figurines. The essence of this ritual, however, is in a gendered accusation made by the patient against a witch. He repeatedly whispers: "whoever you are, witch,"[177] meaning, that even though the text refers to potential witchcraft being performed by either a man or a woman, and the ritual performance is ungendered, the patient makes a

[173] More about substitute king see ibid., 145-155.
[174] Guichard and Lionel "Purity in Ancient Mesopotamia," 104.
[175] Rochberg *In the Path of the Moon*, 21.
[176] Text Maqlû III:88 Tzvi Abusch, *The Witchcraft Series Maqlû*, (Society of Biblical Literature 2015) 77.
[177] Ibid.

gendered connection between the act of witchcraft and a female entity performing this act, and never mentions the warlock.

The gender of the female witch was taken for granted by the Mesopotamian elite, and accordingly, so was the gender of the male *āšipu*. This is probably because women dominated the medical professions amongst the lower classes. They were responsible for preparing food, concocting medicine, treating patients, and child delivery. This gendered specialization created a professional polarization, enabling the stereotypical view of women as witches to be formed. Another factor which could contribute to the establishment of this witch stereotype in Mesopotamia was women who served as priestesses in temples. Women priestesses like the *nadītu* women, on whom I will elaborate later, were involved in rituals and therapeutic activity. Towards the end of the second millennium B.C.E. these professions ceased to exist, and the priestesses lost their prestige. The *nadītu* women and other women serving in temples became a myth, part of the witch stereotype, and the nemesis of elite men in the fields of politics, business, and law. Women became the scapegoat, and witches were accused in this process of every failure ever experienced by men, being held responsible for their deterioration and demise.[178]

Both stereotypes – of the woman as a witch and of the elite magicians as the witch's adversary – were formulated from a male perspective.[179] A similar gendered treatment of the witch is evident in Jewish talmudic literature. It was, of course also based on stereotypes and misogyny which had developed in the Land of Israel but flourished to a great extent due to environmental influences in Babylonia. Jews, as we know, inhabited different centers in Mesopotamia since the exile to Babylonia, in the sixth century B.C.E.. Mesopotamian culture and its world view, filtered through a magical prism, influenced perceptions in the Jewish community and seeped into Jewish culture. Here, too, we see that women's proficiency with medicinal herbs and plants used for cooking was seen as a clear sign of their being witches. The Babylonian Talmud generally considers all women to be witches;[180] for it, women and witchcraft are one and the same. They stated: "most women are engaged in sorcery" (*bSan* 67a). The rabbis tended to interpret every activity performed by women as witchcraft, even those that were seemingly innocent and mundane, like cooking, in the case of the daughters of Rav Nahman (*bGit* 45a), or

[178] For more about witches in Babylonia see Marten Stol, *Women in the Ancient Near East*, (Berlin de Gruyter Inc. 2016) 391-398.
[179] Abusch and Schwemer, *Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Rituals*, 4-7.
[180] Ilan, *Silencing the Queen*, 229-230.

merely sitting at the street corner (*bPes* 111a). When discussing occasions requiring a blessing, the Babylonian Talmud states that a person "walking outside the city," who encounters a pleasant smell, is not supposed to say a blessing for it, the reason being that "the daughters of Israel burn incense to witchcraft" (*bBer* 53a). The custom according to which bread found at the side of the road may not be eaten, is also stipulated because "the daughters of Israel are accustomed in witchcraft" (*bEruv* 64b).

4. Em as Part of the Mesopotamian Magical Cosmos

The magical cosmos and all its forces and principles, functioned in various cultures residing in Mesopotamia. As mentioned, after the Babylonian exile, the Jews gathered in a number of urban centers, and were influenced by Mesopotamian culture and its perception of the world through the prism of magic. I would like to focus on this reciprocal introduction of elements between two different cultures, by using the example of an Akkadian spell using the magic of exchange of fortunes.

At this point, I would like to return to the woman named Em, whom we have already met in chapter two. As we saw, Em was a specialist in pharmaceutics, medicine, and magic, and her knowledge was quoted by Abaye, as always preceded by "Em said to me." It would seem that Em was well acquainted with the secrets of Akkadian rituals, and there are many similarities between the magical formula suggested by her for high fever, and a ritual appearing in "The Diagnostic and Prognostic Handbook" for complications in labor. The essence of this ritual is the magic of exchange of fortunes with a sheep.

Em's formula is quoted by Abaye as follows:

"... ליתוב אפרשת דרכים וכי חזי שומשמנא גמלא דדרי מידי לישקליה ולישדייה בגובתא דנחשא וליסתמיא באברא וליחתמי בשיתין גושפנקי ולברזוליה ולידריה ולימא ליה .'טעונך עלי וטעונאי עלך. '" (בבלי שבת, סו עב)

"… let one sit at the cross-roads, and when he sees a large ant carrying something, let him take and throw it into a brass tube and close it with lead, and seal it with sixty seals. Let him shake it, lift it up and say to it, 'Thy burden be upon me and my burden be upon thee.'" (*bShab* 66b)

The similarities between Em's formula and the Akkadian cuneiform one are expressed in both the wording and the magic activity, along the lines of these five elements: chanting a spell; the use of an animal; ritual activity; repeated performance of the activity; materials. With regard to the spell, as we have seen, the many spells of exchange of fortunes present slight differences, but are essentially the same, reflecting the same content of improving one's fortune. Em's ritual is extremely similar to the Akkadian ritual. The magic act is performed while the spell is chanted and uses an animal for the realization of the solution to the disease.

The following **Table #1** presents the similarities between the rituals:

Magic Performance	Akkadian Formula	Em's Formula
Source	2nd ritual - Text SpTU 5 no. 248 rev. 18′-20′ The Diagnostic and Prognostic Handbook.[181]	Babylonian Talmud *bShab* 66b
Spell	"Take my pregnancy away and so bring me your equivalent."	"טעונך עלי וטעונאי עלך!" "Thy burden be upon me and my burden be upon thee."
Animal	Sheep	Ant
Ritual act	The pregnant woman goes under the sheep (the sheep is placed over the chanter of the spell).[182]	Shaking and lifting the tube containing the ant (the ant is placed over the chanter of the spell).
Repeated performance	Placement of bread and scattering barley seeds.	Sealing the tube with 60 stamp seals.
Materials	Food offerings; amulet made of stones woven into a copper thread.	Copper tube; led seal.

Obviously this similarity reflects Em's proficiency in this Mesopotamian ritual. Her other formulae, which are quoted by Abaye, suggest that she was either able to read the inscriptions on cuneiform tablets, or they reached her in the form of an Aramaic prescription book. This might, alternatively (though less likely) have been part of a larger oral corpus of spells and concoctions by Jewish and Mesopotamian women of the healing community, transmitted by word of mouth.

I should add that the rabbis were likewise familiar with Mesopotamian magic acts in general, and with this specific ritual in particular. Immediately after suggesting Em's formula quoted by

[181] Scurlock, *Sourcebook for Ancient Mesopotamian Medicine*, 690.

[182] The pregnant woman goes under the sheep seven times and when she comes out the seventh time, she spits into its mouth and then she leaves. For more see ibid.

Abaye, a debate takes place between two other rabbis – Rav Aha son of Rav Huna and Rav Ashi – who suggest replacing this exchange of fortunes magic formula, with a "one directional" formula that acts by the power of sympathetic magic. The rabbis' prefer a version that tosses the fortune, in this case the misfortune of the disease, into the river. The rabbis' version also has clear similarities to the first version (of three) of the Akkadian ritual against miscarriage.[183] There is no reason given for the rabbis' preference for sympathetic magic over magic of exchange of fortunes; we cannot know whether the attempts to maintain a cosmic equilibrium were gendered, or whether the rabbis merely chose to use the magical element with which they were most familiar.

It is important to highlight the paradox in the rabbis' perception of magic when they perform it. Theoretically, they were not allowed to be involved in sorcery, as the Torah clearly forbids it. The mere notion that rabbis, as human beings, would be allowed to possess godly powers in changing the fortune of a person is essentially a form of idolatry or blasphemy, which they so vehemently opposed. Nevertheless, many rabbis seem to have had vast knowledge in magic, arguing that it was part of their learning. Their own activities were not classified as sorcery, but rather as the legitimate act of studying, or sincere, devoted prayers. For example, we have the following tradition:

"כדרב חנינא ורב אושעיא כל מעלי שבתא הוו עסקי בהלכות יצירה ומיברי להו עיגלא תילתא ואכלי ליה." (בבלי סנהדרין סז עב)

> As in the case of R. Hanina and R. Oshaia, who spent every Sabbath eve in studying the Laws of Creation, by means of which they created a third-grown calf and ate it. (*bSan* 67b)

In the next chapter, I will discuss the magical aspect of the incantation bowls, supplying evidence that the authors of the bowls were also highly proficient in the field of magic of exchange of fortunes.

5. Women's Occupations in Mesopotamia

So far, we have gathered information regarding women in Mesopotamian rituals and spells. As expected, we revealed a picture of the magical cosmos, and of the language in which it was conducted, with references to scenarios where women were involved as patients.

[183] Ibid.,688.

We will now search for women through another medium – in contracts and letters containing lists of professionals employed in temples and palaces.

Mesopotamian women, like all women in the ancient world, served in traditional female roles, usually performed from home. When they worked outside the household, their employment was regarded as an extension of their domestic roles. Women's roles were usually related to different areas of food preparation, derivatives of textile production, child delivery, and also inn keeping. There is written evidence of these occupations held by women, as well as archaeological evidence in cylinder seals.[184]

Despite having all these sources and evidence, we find very little official documentation of women's occupations. Once again, we can suspect that this begins with the way things are labeled. The term "work" is used to describe activity for which a wage is paid.[185] This definition differentiates between people who are active, and those who are not on the basis of being paid. Housewives, who are not monetarily compensated for the long hours spent working at home, are therefore not considered active. This perception results, on one hand, in the work of the housewife not being documented and, on the other hand, in it not attracting scholarly attention. While it is true that, when the productivity of a woman's work exceeded the family consumption (cooking, baking, etc.), the surplus was used for trading, but still housewives were not perceived as professionals. Documentation is as scarce when it comes to women employed outside the domestic sphere, even when their work entailed management. Women's work was perceived in terms of extending their domestic responsibilities, even when they served as a *šakintu (*female administrator.)[186]

Camille Lecompte studied a series of lexical lists which had been used as instructional texts for students until the end of the use of the cuneiform script. These lists (in Sumerian) date back to as far as the end of the fourth millennium B.C.E. and are comprised of names and professions of members of the Mesopotamian elite. The lists were updated over time. In the second millennium, they were supplemented with Akkadian translations, in which further contemporary updates were added, to which I shall return below. During the first millennium, the text was

[184] Dominique Collon, "Babylonian Seals" in Gwendolyn Leick (ed.) *The Babylonian World* (Routledge NY 2007) 95-123.

[185] Brigitte Lion and Michel Cécile (eds.) *The Role of Women in Work and Society in the Ancient Near East* (Berlin De Gruyter 2016) 2.

[186] The *šakintu* were women who managed fortunes and vast households of queens, from 788 BCE until the end of the Neo-Assyrian Empire in 612 BCE. For more see Saana Svärd, "Studying Gender: A Case study of female administrators in Neo-Assyrian palaces," in ibid., 451-453.

canonized, preserving the past and present of those times, along the lines of Mesopotamian tradition.[187] These lexical lists are a gold mine for anyone who wishes to expand the little information we have regarding women in Mesopotamia, and for us, in our search for educated women, particularly literate ones.

During the Neo-Babylonian Era (626-539 B.C.) women's professions mentioned in these texts are within the scope of housewife chores: working as wet nurses; in food production – cooking, baking, grinding; in textile – spinning and weaving; [188] in perfume making;[189] and as innkeepers. Some professional openings became available to women in this later period, which until then were exclusively reserved for men, such as smithery, tannery, construction, agriculture, horticulture, and domestication of animals.[190] Perhaps the need for women to go into these professions arose after many men had to leave to serve as soldiers in wars.[191] We shall soon see that women also served in male-oriented roles, requiring higher education. These women worked as scribes and as priestesses.

Before going up that branch of women's occupations, I would like to stop and make an important point. We must take into consideration that it is very hard to know exactly how many women served as priestesses, and all the more so regarding those whose occupation was in the field of fortune telling. The common term *assinnu* (man/woman) is not-gendered. The administrational lexical lists sometimes leave the gender of the professional unknown.[192] We can therefore only speculate that the number of women working in the fields of priesthood, and particularly of prophecy, was actually much higher than what we find in the texts we are about to examine.

5.1 *Priestesses*

"Priestess" is mentioned as an occupation, both within the family sphere and outside of it, in administrational documents listing temple workforce quota. Lists of women appointed to

[187] Camille Lecompte "Representation of Women in Mesopotamian Lexical Lists," in ibid 29-56 esp. Pp. 29-30.
[188] More about female weavers see Louise Quillien "Invisible Workers: The Role of Women in Textile Production During the 1st millennium BC," in ibid., 476-490.
[189] More about female perfume-maker - muraqqītu see Laura Cousin "Beauty Experts: Female Perfume-Makers in the 1st Millennium BC," in ibid, 512-523.
[190] Bertrand Lafont, "Women at Work and Women in Economy and Society during the Neo Sumerian Period," in ibid., 151.
[191] Lion and Cécile, in ibid., 71-89.
[192] Martti Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East* (Biblical Literature 2003) 7.

various roles date back to as early as the third millennium and were updated with new information over time, so that they eventually included more and more functions taken over by woman priestesses. These priestesses served in a number of liturgical and administrative roles in temples.

Priestesses or nuns can already be identified as a distinguished class within aristocracy in Babylonian antiquity. Tablets from the 19th and 18th centuries B.C.E. from *Sippar* document the *nadītu*, woman priestesses, who were proprietors enjoying a special legal status, living in monasteries and devoting themselves to a certain deity – either to *Šamaš*, the God of Sun in Sippar, or to *Marduk* in the city of Babylon.[193] These women came from wealthy families, some of them from royal families. Their role was to pray for the family's welfare. When they entered the temple service, they brought their dowry with them, lands that they inherited when their fathers or brothers died (but not through marriage). The *nadītu*, priestesses conducted their own businesses, leasing land and making investments in real estate in the cities of Sippar, Babylon, and Nippur.[194] They also seem to have been involved in writing. They wrote lease or acquisition contracts themselves.[195]

The following **Table #2** presents lexical terminology of priestesses in temples[196]

Title	Description
egi_2-zi	High priestess of Ninurta or Iškur
egi_2-zi an-na	Priestess of An in high position
ereš-dingir	High priestess of *ēntum/ugbabtum* – of the Goddess Ba-U_2
Ninurta, ereš	High Priestess
Zirru	Priestess of Nanna
Nunuzzi	Priestess of Utu
pi-in-ku	Priestess of Ea/Enki

[193] Elizabeth C. Stone, "The Social Role of the Nadītu Women in Old Babylonian Nippur," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 25 (1982) 50-70.

[194] For more about *nadītu* priestess see Ichiro Nakata "Economic Activities of Nadītum-Women of Šamaš Reflected in the Field Sale Contracts (MHET II/1–6)," in Lion and Cécile, *The Role of Women in Work* 254-269**;** For other women who devoted their lives to religion but did not live in a cloister see Stol, *Women in the Ancient Near East*, 605-616.

[195] Lion, "Literacy and Gender," 105.

[196] Lecompte, "Representation of Women in Mesopotamian Lexical Lists," 38.

The *nadītu* priestesses are also mentioned in spells against demons – *Udug-hul-a-kam* – as participants in the flour-offering ritual against miscarriage.[197] I speculate, based on a review of the lexicon, that there were other priestesses performing rituals, especially ones that revolved around other women. The list of occupations which go under the definition of priestess, as an umbrella term, suggests that women might have also performed rituals treating men. I emphasize again, that in the thousands of rituals documented in cuneiform script, no priestesses are ever mentioned as the performers of a ritual. Nevertheless, the following list of occupations supports the hypotheses that priestesses, who were on the workforce quota in temples, performed some of the rituals, or at least participated in them. As already mentioned, when the Sumerian list was copied and translated into Akkadian, new categories were added to it, so that there were more women's roles, and they also became more significant.[198] Two of these women professions deserve particular attention: the *munus a-zu* – physician, and the *munus ka-pirig* – exorcist.

The following **Table #3** presents Akkadian professions added to the Assyrian list:[199]

Title	Description
munus ka-pirig	Exorcist
mu-še-[li]-tum	Necromancer
munus ens	Diviner
muḫḫūtu + zabbatum	Ecstatic woman
munus uš$_7$-zu	Sorceress
munus a-zu	Physician
munus dub-sar	Scribe

In the city of Uruk, during the Seleucid period, there were priestesses who were also merchants. The liturgical activity in this city was performed at local temples, and exclusively reserved for a certain class of men who belonged to the local clergy. These priests would sell leftovers from the rituals (baked delicacies, meat, oil, beer) to financially support themselves. Yet, between the

[197] Markham J. Geller and Ludek Vacin, *Healing Magic and Evil Demons*: Canonical Udug-hul Incantations (Berlin De Gruyter 2015). 56
[198] Ibid., 44.
[199] Ibid., 44-45.

years 305 and 141 B.C.E. we discover lists stating that out of 200 transactions, 31 were made by 25 different women, constituting 20% of the priestly community at the time. For instance, we learn that a woman named *Bēlessunu* completed eight transactions, trading in nine different types of goods, between the years 206 and 197 B.C.E. However it should be noted that the priestesses normally required a male relative's official permission to conduct trade related to ritual products.

Finally, I note that a comment in the list not only supports the notion that women played an active role in rituals; it states that the priestess must find a **substitute** for herself in order to attend to ritual matters, if she needs to leave.[200]

The last type of priestess I would like to mention is the woman oracle. Messages regarding the future were transmitted to the oracle priests and priestesses in a spontaneous manner, while they entered a state of ecstasy, or an otherwise altered state of mind, unlike other Mesopotamian methods of future telling, which relied on observations and calculations. From the tablets (letters, and reports) which have been discovered, we learn that a considerable portion of the oracular priests were women. Apart from the priestesses who lived in temples, the letters refer to nomadic priestesses, who were going from one town to the other, spreading their words of prophecy.[201]

5.2 *Women Scribes/Authors*

The earliest woman-scribe/author we know in Mesopotamia is *Enheduana*, daughter of King *Sargon* of Akkad (24th century B.C.E.), who devoted herself to be a priestess of the moon god, *Nanna* of *Ur*. She wrote poems to the Goddess *Ištar*, the moon God, and her city, as well as 42 hymns to major temples.[202] The daughter of King *Sîn-kašid* of Uruk (18th century B.C.E.), known as *Nin-šata-pada*, was also a poet.[203] Two other women poets mentioned by name are *Šima-ilat*, daughter of King *Zimri Lim* (1775-1762 B.C.), and *Abilibura*, who was a scribe at the archive of *Chagar Bazar*.

Nin-UN-íl is an Akkadian woman scribe whose name appears in a cuneiform script list of allowance receivers at the *Ekur* temple in Nippur. She is accompanied by other male and female

[200] Julien Monerie, "Women and Prebends in Seleucid Uruk," ibid., 526-542 Esp. p. 529.
[201] For more about oracles see Simon B. Parker, "Official Attitudes toward Prophecy at Mari and in Israel," *Vetus Testamentum*, 43 (1993) 50-68.
[202] Lion, "Literacy and Gender," 128**;** More about *Enheduana* see Stol, *Women in the Ancient Near East*, 564-566.
[203] Monerie, "Women and Prebends in Seleucid Uruk," 577.

scribes who received compensation for their work (in the form of beer, bread, and flour). In the beginning of the second millennium B.C.E., particularly in Mari and Sippar, in the royal archives, more and more evidence points to the presence of women scribes. On the list of wage-earners (receiving oil and wool), we find plenty of women's occupations: musicians, sweepers, maids, bakers, millers, and nine scribes. In addition to those, the three female scribes of the royal kitchen are also mentioned. Employment of female-scribes in Mesopotamian palaces was also customary and common.[204] The two priestesses, *Ili-andulli* and *Iŝḫi-Dagan*, received the title of *āpilum*, serving as royal prophets on a regular basis.[205]

There were also professional mourners on the scribe payroll. In the third and fourth millennia B.C.E., liturgical weepers would be employed at the temple, for funeral services. The mourners would compose their lamentations, inscribe them, and play a string instrument the *balaĝ*, while singing them, comforting the deity. The lamentations were in an ancient Assyrian language, Emesal, which taught in scribe schools. In addition to the genre of lamentations, which were part of rituals, there were lamentations which were used in royal inscriptions, prayers, hymns, and myths. We should also note that inappropriate human behavior was believed to be a trigger that might unleash the wrath of the gods, thereby leading to catastrophic consequences. The lamentation was therefore a method for dealing with such calamities. Professional lamentations appear in many different contexts. They were used to maintain cosmic order by balancing the human and the divine spheres. These lamentations were written, composed, and performed as an offering to the gods, as a surety for divine grace towards mortals.[206] In order to become a professional mourner, a woman would not only have to be literate, but she would also require a higher education in a number of additional genres.[207]

Another important and relevant piece of information is that boys and some girls enjoyed the same levels of education in Mesopotamian. We learn this from tablets from four major schools in *Sippar*. Many of these school tablets contain writing exercises in the scribes' own handwriting, beginning with apprenticeship and up until compositions of literary essays. The document also ends with a signature in the scribes' handwriting, from which we learn that women also enjoyed higher education, and that many of them were also proficient in writing.

[204] Ibid., 99.
[205] Jonathan Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East: A Philological and Sociological Comparison* (Leiden Brill 2012) 45.
[206] For more about lamenting see Anne Löhnert, "Manipulating the gods: Lamenting in Context" in Karen Radner and Eleanor Robson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture* (Oxford University Press 2011) 402 – 417.
[207] Ibid., 406-407.

6. Priestesses without Monasteries

Since the third millennium B.C.E., and up until the demise of the cuneiform script, in 100 C.E., we find women who participated in writing activities in many aspects of life in Mesopotamia, including religious aspects. Temples were the last "fortress" of Mesopotamian civilization, and they were also the conservative guard of the cuneiform script. They were still active as late as the third century C.E.,[208] but the essence of the magical perception we described thus far did not become obsolete along with the cuneiform script. It seems that this tradition and the "habitus" of the magical cosmos were passed down too, and continued to be active in the Parthian Empire (247 B.C.E.-224 C.E.).[209] Language and culture do not just disintegrate overnight. Magical literature and its ingredients of this culture – spells and rituals – were copied and recopied, time and again.[210] And thus, while the practice of magic lost its connection to its source, even after the scribes were no longer copying the texts, and the *āšipu* was no longer performing any rituals, the magical act lived on and flourished over centuries, [211] and its force continued to spiral along surface of the incantation bowls.

According to Montgomery, basing his claim on archaeological excavations, the practice of writing incantation bowls begins around the time when the use of cuneiform script stops, in the third century C.E.[212] If this is indeed the case, there was some overlap between the two, implying that the tradition of writing incantation bowls began while Mesopotamian temples were still standing. When cuneiform writing and reading skills could no longer be utilized, the culture offered an alternative with Mesopotamian hues, in the form of incantation bowls, written in Aramaic in all its different dialects.[213]

As we have seen, the work force quotas of temples included many women holding administrative positions as scribes, and liturgic positions as priestesses. Both of these branches required broad horizons and polished writing skills, far beyond simple copying. Some of the priestesses were involved in the writing and creating of liturgical contents like lamentations,

[208] M. J. Geller, "Tablets and Magic Bowls," in Shaul Shaked (ed.) *Officina Magica: Essays on the Practice of Magic in Antiquity* (Leiden Brill 2005) 53-72 esp. p. 53.
[209] Ibid., 31.
[210] James Alan Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur* (Philadelphia University Museum 1913) 103.
[211] Ibid.
[212] Ibid.
[213] Markham J. Geller, "Magic Bowls Belong in Babylonia," in Herbert Niehr Und Hermann Michael (eds.), *Zauber und Magie im antiken Palästina und in seiner Umwelt* (Harrassowitz Verlag 2017) 95-106 esp. p. 97.

which were original compositions both in word and in music. We can only speculate what befell the women exorcists, physicians, mourners, and scribes, once their temples and rituals ceased to exist. My personal opinion, if I may add it here, is that they continued their work, exorcising evil spirits, healing, and writing; they might have even been involved in the magic act of writing the incantation bowls.

Chapter 4
Incantation Bowls – A Mesopotamian Perspective

Up until now, we have been on a historical and geographical search for women and writing. Each of the previous chapters presented evidence of an elaborate tradition of womanly writing in a different vocational area: secular, religious, and magical. This chapter will be devoted to "inside" evidence, i.e. to the search for the female, and the male authors of the incantation bowls *inside* the text written on the bowls.

An incantation bowl is a fairly sizable amulet made of clay. A magic text spirals along the concave surface inside the bowl. This chapter tackles the story of the incantation bowls from the perspective of the magical cosmos, reflecting an ancient Mesopotamian tradition. But first, here is some information regarding the incantation bowl and its characteristic elements.

1. Incantation Bowls – Identity Card

The following **Table #4** reviews the general information about the incantation bowl

Domain	Details	Reserchers
Name	Incantation bowl = amulet (qmy); bowl (ksʾ); a written document (ktbʾ)	Shaked, Ford and Bhayro[214]
Place	Mesopotamia – discovered in different cities in central Iraq and west Iran.	M.G. Morony[215]
Dates	First appeared around the 3rd century C.E. Disappeared around the 7th century C.E.	S. Shaked[216] J.A. Montgomery[217] M.J. Geller[218]
Materials	Unglazed earthenware – biscuit ware.	E. Hunter[219]
Physical	Round bowl with wide rims; the base of the bowl is either	E. Hunter[220]

[214] Shaul Shaked, James Nathan Ford, and Siam Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells: Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls* (Magical and Religious Literature of Late Antiquity 1; Brill, 2013) 8.
[215] M.G, Morony, "Magic and Society in Late Sasanian Iraq," in Scott Noegel, Joel Walker, and Brannon Wheeler (eds.), *Prayer, Magic and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World* (The Pennsylvania State University Press 2003) 83–107 esp. p. 87.
[216] Shaul Shaked, "Form and Purpose in Aramaic Spells: Some Jewish Themes, (The Poetics of Magic Texts)," Shaul Shaked (ed.) *Officina Magica: Essays on the Practice of Magic in Antiquity* (Leiden Brill 2005) 1-30 esp. p.1.
[217] Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 103-104.
[218] Geller, "Magic Bowls Belong in Babylonia," 97.
[219] Erica Hunter, "The Typology of the Incantation Bowls: Physical Features and Decorative Aspects," in J. B. Segal (ed.), *Catalogue of the Aramaic and Mandaic Incantation Bowls in the British Museum* (London British Museum Press; 2000) 163–88.
[220] Ibid., 165-167**;** 321-324.

characteristics	round or conical; the colors of the bowl are shades of red or crème, and the texture is chalky. Average dimensions: Diameter: 13-20cm; Depth: 3-8cm	M.G, Morony [221]
Production	Standard, wheel-thrown pottery. The production of the bowls themselves was not designated for this specific magic purpose, and scholarly opinion is that they were picked out of mass-produced Sasanian ware. The shape of the bowls resembles that of drinking cups commonly used in those times.	E. Hunter[222]
Language of the text	Non-canonical Aramaic text in several dialects, written in square Aramaic script, Mandaic and Syriac, with variations in locution and graphic conventions (this study will only examine bowls which were written in Judeo-Aramaic in the square Aramaic script).	M. Morgenstern[223] D. Levene[224]
Organization of the text	The text is written in ink on the inner wall of the bowl, usually in a concentric spiral. The Text begins at the base of the bowl, going around in a counter-clockwise direction, so that the direction of the writing fits the Aramaic. The text is usually enclosed in the area created between an inner and an outer circle. The writing rarely spills over to the outer side of the bowl.	E. Hunter[225] M.G. Morony[226]
Contents	A magical corpus with Jewish motifs, interwoven with prophetic and rabbinical figures whose names were mentioned in the other canons also in connection with magic; biblical quotes; liturgical contents from everyday prayers; and phrases taken from the Babylonian Talmud, the Mishnah, Hekhalot Literature, Jewish divorce documents, and Jewish historiolas. These are accompanied by elements from Mesopotamian rituals, as well as strings of names of Mesopotamian entities from the Persian, Zoroastrian, and Christian traditions.	T. Harviainen[227] J.A. Montgomery[228] S. Shaked.[229]
Incantation formulae	The magical text appears in a standard formula with slight variations. It contains the following elements: opening; summoning powerful forces; names of the beneficiaries; protection, warning, and threat spells; expelling spells;	Shaked, Ford and Bhayro[230] S. Shaked[231]

[221] Morony, "Magic and Society in Late Sasanian Iraq," 84-87.
[222] Hunter, "The Typology of the Incantation Bowls," 169.
[223] Matthew Morgenstern, "Jewish Babylonian Aramaic in the Incantation Bowls," in Shaul Shaked, James Nathan Ford and Siam Bhayro (eds.), *Aramaic Bowl Spells Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls* (Leiden Brill, 2013) 39-49.
[224] Dan Levene, *A Corpus of Magic Bowls: Incantation Texts in Jewish Aramaic from Late Antiquity* (Kegan Paul 2003) 4-7.
[225] Hunter, "The Typology of the Incantation Bowls," 170-171.
[226] Morony, "Magic and Society in Late Sasanian Iraq," 94.
[227] T. Harviainen, "Syncretistic and Confession Features in Mesopotamian Incantation Bowls," *Studia Orientalia* 70 (1993) 29–37.
[228] Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 109-111.
[229] Shaked, "Form and Purpose in Aramaic Spells," 1-30 **;** Shaul Shaked, "Transmission and Transformation of Spells: The Case of the Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls," in Gideon Bohak, Yuval Harari, Shaul Shaked (eds.), *Continuity and Innovation in the Magical Tradition* (Leiden Brill 2011) 187-188.
[230] Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells: Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls,* 9-18.
[231] Shaked, "Transmission and Transformation of Spells," 187–217.

	nomina barbara. Distinct genres can be identified, such as the divorce (גט) formula, curse/blessing formula, Mesopotamian formula, Jewish formula, and talmudic formula. There is also a general charm which contains a bit of everything. The text was custom-made to meet the needs of the bowl beneficiaries, and we find different modifications made to the incantation formula according to their demands.	
Illustrations	The author of the bowl is also the illustrator. In most cases, one anthropomorphic figure of a chained supernatural entity is drawn on the base of the bowl. The illustrated figure is usually enclosed in a magic circle. Some bowls lack illustrations, and some have an empty magic circle.	E. Hunter[232] N. Vilozny[233]
Purpose	The bowl serves as a personal, intimate amulet for a single person or a group of people – usually members of one family. The bowl is aimed at improving the future of the beneficiaries, by summoning heavenly forces and various supernatural entities. These assist the beneficiaries through protection against demons, evil spirits, disease, and bad fortune, acting as an insurance policy against the return of expelled haunters. Some formulae protect against curses.	S. Shaked[234] Regarding curses - D. Levene[235]
Burial	The bowl was buried faced down, under the threshold of the house, inside the inner walls, or in the courtyard. In some cases, two bowls were buried together, glued at the rims with bitumen.	M. G. Morony[236] D. Levene[237]
Author of the bowl	**?**	J.A. Montgomery[238] J.B. Segal[239] S. Shaked[240]
Beneficiaries of the bowls	The names of the beneficiaries appearing in the incantation formula are matronymic. They are common	M.G. Morony [241] S. Shaked[242]

[232] Erica Hunter, "Who are the Demons? The Iconography of Incantation Bowls," *Studi Epigrafici e Linguistici sul Vicino Oriente antico* 15 (1998) 95-115.

[233] Naama Vilozny, *Figure and Image in Magic and Popular Art: Between Babylonia and Palestine, During the Roman and Byzantine Periods* (Ph.D. Diss. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem 2010) 208; 214 (Hebrew.)

[234] S. Shaked, "Jews, Christians and Pagans in the Aramaic Incantation Bowls of the Sasanian Period," in A. Destro and M. Pesce (eds.), *Religions and Cultures. First International Conference of Mediterraneum* (Binghamton 2002) 61–89.

[235] Dan Levene, "Curse or Blessing: What's in the Magic Bowl?" in: *The Ian Karten Lecturer in Jewish History*, (University of Southampton, 2002).

[236] Morony, "Magic and Society in Late Sasanian Iraq," 95-96.

[237] Dan Levene, "'This is a Qybl' for Overturning Sorceries': Form, Formula-Threads in a Web of Transmission," *Continuity and Innovation in the Magical Tradition*, 219-244**;** Dan Levene, *Jewish Aramaic Curse Texts from Late-Antique Mesopotamia: "May These Curses Go Out and Flee*" (Leiden Brill 2013) 12.

[238] Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 48.

[239] J. B. Segal, *Catalogue of the Aramaic and Mandaic Incantation Bowls in the British Museum* (British Museum 2000) 25.

[240] Shaked, "Transmission and Transformation of Spells," 187-188.

[241] Morony, "Magic and Society in Late Sasanian Iraq," 83–107.

[242] Shaul Shaked, "Magic Bowls and Incantation Texts: How to Get Rid of Demons and Pests," *Qadmoniot* 129 (2005) 2-13 esp. p. 9 (Hebrew).

	names, typical of ethnic groups such as Jews, Mandaeans, Persians, Zoroastrians and Manichaeans. With regard to gender, 60% of the beneficiaries, whose names are mentioned in the incantation formula, are men, and the remaining 40% are women. It should be noted that the number of women's names that are mentioned is obviously much higher than the number of women who are the actual purchasers, because the men appear with their mothers' names.	
Prominent Researchers	The leading researcher of incantation bowls are: J.A. Montgomery; J. Naveh ; S. Shaked; J.N. Ford; S. Bhayro; M. Morgenstern; D. Levene; E. Hunter; C.H. Gordon; M.J. Geller; Ch. Müller-Kessler; J. B. Segal; E. M. Yamauchi; C. D. Isbell.	M. G. Morony[243]

2. Temporal Delimitation of the Phenomenon of Bowl Writing

The tradition of writing incantation bowls was short lived, in historical terms. There is no evidence documenting the commencement of their use, so that it is pretty much shrouded in mystery, and the same can be said regarding their disappearance from Jewish culture. They first appeared when Mesopotamian culture ceased to exist, and the knowledge inscribed in cuneiform tablets could no longer be exploited. This void was apparently filled with a cultural alternative with medical purposes – a new version of magic in Mesopotamian hues, in the form of the incantation bowl.[244] With cultural exchange as background, we can also get to the bottom of the disappearance of the incantation bowls. With the emergence of Islam in the seventh century, a new and effective source of medicine emerged – The Syriac Book of Medicines – and the population began experimenting with methods of diagnosis and prognosis, with treatments and prescriptions from Greek medicine.[245] Incantation bowls might have been a phenomenon that passed away together with the people who embraced it, while their family members chose different customs for protections against demons, evil spirits, and disease.[246]

We can hypothesize that the tradition of writing the incantation bowls began in the third century, when Mesopotamian temples were still standing. This assessment would explain why the incantation bowls are so strongly painted with Mesopotamian shades. Religious matters apparently did not play an important role for the bowl beneficiaries, some of whom purchased

[243] For a list of researchers according to the areas in the tablet till 2007 see Michael G. Morony, "Religion and the Aramaic Incantation Bowls," *Religion Compass* 1 (2007) 414–429.
[244] Geller, "Magic Bowls Belong in Babylonia," 97.
[245] Ibid.
[246] Morony, "Magic and Society in Late Sasanian Iraq," 107.

several different bowls, each with a different religious orientation.[247] The Aramaic incantation bowls include a mixture of Christian formulae using rabbinic authority, alongside Jewish formulae basing themselves on the power of Jesus Christ.[248] 1,000 years in the diaspora resulted in a state where a multitude of local motifs penetrated Jewish culture. In the incantation formulae, we find Babylonian gods like Šamaš, the God of Sun; or Sîn, the God of Moon; as well as Marduk, Bel, or Nirgal.[249] The Goddess Ishtar appears in a generic manner, as part of a chain of names of demons and spirits. There are incantation formulae in which parts of rituals performed by the *āšipu* (exorcist) can be recognized. One example of this is a bowl which will be discussed later, where 3 distinct Mesopotamian rituals are referenced. The bowl was written by Gušnazdukht daughter of Aḥat.[250]

3. Bowl Text

The incantation formulae are a magic discourse lacking literary organization[251], containing, inter alia, mysterious-sounding words that have no known meaning, irregular speech, and unusual sentence structure. The language of magic in which the bowl is written is comprised of familiar words and atypical ones. In some cases, the *voces magicae* are the result of alterations made to Mesopotamian texts, in order to adjust them to the Aramaic language.[252] The texts were accompanied by equally mysterious illustrations.[253] Reading the text, one is left with a feeling that the magic speech, grammar, and vocabulary are taken from "another territory".[254] The language is congested and includes words which are seemingly superfluous. There are ample repetitions. All of these imply that this might have been an oral text which was related to an

[247] Christa Müller-Kessler, "Of Jesus, Darius, Marduk...: Aramaic Magic Bowls in the Moussaieff Collection," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 125: 2 (2005) 219-240 esp. p. 220.
[248] Tal Ilan, "Jesus and Joshua ben Perahiah," in Ra'anan S. Boustan, Klaus Herrmenn, Reimund Leicht, Annette Yoshiko Reed and Giuseppe Veltri (eds.) *Envisioning Judaism: Studies in Honor of Peter Schäfer on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2013) 985-995.
[249] Motgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 238.
[250] Text BM 135563 - James Nathan Ford, "The Ancient Mesopotamian Motif of *kidinnu*: 'Divine Protection (of Temple Cities and their Citizens)' in Akkadian and Aramaic Magic," in Uri Gabbay and Shai Secunda (eds.) *Encounters by the Rivers of Babylon* (Tübingen Mohr Siebeck 2014) 271-285.
[251] Shaul Shaked, "The Poetics of Spells, Language and Structure in Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity," in Abusch, T. and K. Van der Toorn (eds.) *Mesopotamian Magic, Textual, Historical and Interpretative Perspectives* (Siyx publications 1999) 173-195 esp. p. 173**.** More about the structure of the incantation bowl see Shaked, Ford and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 8-13.
[252] Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 258-259.
[253] Shaked, Ford and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 7.
[254] Bronisław Malinowski, *Coral Gardens and their Magic: A Study of the Methods of Tilling the Soil and of Agricultural Rites in the Trobriand Islands* (Allen and Unwin; London 1935) 219-222.

object, as part of a performative ritual, rather than a scholastic or mechanical act of copying.[255] Semantically, I assume that the text must contain references to a ritual performed simultaneously with the process of creation, writing, and burial of the bowl. The text might have been whispered as part of the spiralled writing, and/or recited afterwards, or while burying the bowl. Additionally, Edwin M. Yamauchi's theory is that the incantation formula was anomalous in terms of routine speech and recited in an artificial manner, similar to spells used in the *maqlû* ritual, which I will describe below.[256]

The bowl text is intended to communicate with supernatural entities through an eclectic assortment of quotes from canonized Jewish religious literature,[257] welded together with distinctive Mesopotamian elements. The words on the incantation bowl constitute more than mere means of communication; they are in fact the essence of the act itself.[258] The perception of the magic dialect can be described through the model suggested by Jean Bottéro as "written discourse." The premise of people using the incantation bowls was that the name of an object constitutes the object.[259] The word was not just a symbol – it created the actual tangible object or the act itself. For instance, the magic divorce text, created the divorce. Thus, the closer one was to the original text, the more powerful the effect was, in terms of sympathetic magic of similarity. The power of the use of formal legal language in the divorce formula written on the bowl created the convention of a new legal state for its beneficiaries.[260] The text on the bowl, whether it came from the Jewish religion or from Mesopotamian tradition, was based on a cultural context and the local culture codes of comprehension. Therefore, the incantation formula was affected reality and altered it, creating changes in the worldly life of the beneficiaries. We have already seen that the wording in the magical cosmos promotes the unexpected.[261] However, as a tool, magic is surprisingly clear, offering straightforward

[255] Charles G. Häberl, "Aramaic Incantation Texts between Orality and Textuality," in Julia Rubanovich (ed.), *Orality and Textuality in the Iranian World: Patterns of Interaction Across the Centuries* (Leiden Brill 2015) 365-399, esp. pp. 396-397.
[256] Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Aramaic Magic Bowls," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 85 (1965) 511-523 esp. p. 522.
[257] Dan Levene, "Curse or Blessing: What's in the Magic Bowl?," 7.
[258] Shaked, "The Poetics of Spells," 174.
[259] Jean Bottéro, "The Intelligence of the World," in Jean Bottéro, Clarisse Herrenschmidt, and Jean-Pierre Vernant (eds.), *Ancestor of the West: Writing, Reasoning, and Religion in Mesopotamia* (University of Chicago Press 2000) 34-50 esp. p. 44.
[260] Shaked, "The Poetics of Spells," 174.
[261] Discussion about "coefficient of weirdness" according to Malinowski see in Andrew T. Wilburn, *Materia Magica: The Archaeology of Magic in Roman Egypt, Cyprus, and Spain* (The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor 2012) 54-94.

explanations to causes of diseases, be they physical, neurological, or psychological. The incantation exorcised supernatural entities, demons, and spirits, and secured the safety of those, whose names became part of the incantation formula.

The texts of the incantation bowls are made up of uniquely-phrased formulae with repetitive qualities, which were presumably based on written and oral heritage. A multitude of incantation bowls suggest that their authors chose their formulae out of spell-books, like *Sefer Ha-Razim*, in which a unique angelological-cosmological esoteric perception of the celestial world, as it was perceived by Jewish holders of secret-knowledge in the third or fourth century, was described. The book presents the structure of the cosmos and its seven heavens, accommodating a plethora of angels – a structure which is also mentioned by Resh Lakish in the Babylonian Talmud (*bHag* 12b). The practices described in *Sefer Ha-Razim* assume that magic formulae can be used to summon angels specified by name, whose area of expertise and celestial position in a certain heaven are known, and who can therefore be enlisted to assist by fulfilling wishes and changing reality.[262]

The authors who wrote the incantation bowls took the liberty of adding to the copied formula or removing certain parts of it, especially at its beginning and end. The result is a variety of unique formulae,[263] tailor-made to fit the clients' needs and desires, according to his/her disease, ailment, demon entity, or evil spirit by which each had been attacked. The names of the beneficiaries were part of the incantation formula, and the authors consistently used the matronymic derived from the name of one of the mothers in the family. Patronymics are used very rarely.[264] The use of matronymic appellations is typical of the magical cosmos, and is also present in liturgical healing texts, in contrast to the standard use of a person's patronymic, by which he/she was usually identified in society.[265] Evidence for the widespread use of matronymics in the magical cosmos, as well as in the medical one, is found in Abaye's quote of Em: "Abaye said: Em said to me: all which are repeated several times, be in the name of the mother" (*bShab* 66b).

[262] For more see Ithamar Gruenwald, *Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity, Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Brill Online E-Books 2014) 255-263.
[263] S. Shaked, "The Poetics of Spells," 187.
[264] Patronymic names, for example: Rav Aha bar Rav Huna, Text VII. MS 1928/49:6, Shaked, ibid., 20-22
[265] Shaked, "Form and purpose in Aramaic spells," 20.

Matronymics were also common in magical practice outside of Judaism, in cultures and religions in diverse parts of the world during antiquity.[266] It may have been considered safer to use the matronymics, as the identity of the mother is never questioned, and thus preferred in areas involving supernatural entities.[267] Yet, from a rabbinic perspective, this custom might have been a hint to the alleged connection between women and sorcery.[268] Either way, the metronymic represents a more personal, intimate method of identification – more feminine, also fitting the incantation bowls, as a medium, containing, amongst the numerous formulae, many feminine concerns and diseases.[269]

Most of the beneficiary names on the incantation bowls are Persian, and a minority are Aramaic or biblical. The lion's share of texts is written in Judeo-Aramaic, a smaller portion in Mandaic and Syriac, and another tiny fraction in Arabic, presumably composed quite close to the Muslim conquests.[270]

4. The Gender of the Bowl Beneficiaries

The statistics derived from the incantation bowls indicate that the population of the beneficiaries was comprised of about 60% men, and 40% women. It has been shown that this ratio is a constant in the medium of magic.[271] In specific cases, however, different figures emerge. Michael G. Morony calculated 59% men and 41% women. Tal Ilan examined a collection of amulets which showed a surprisingly larger portion of woman purchasers – 58.3% of these amulets were addressed to women.[272] All these finds, but Ilan's most specifically, suggest that the magical cosmos emphasizes the presence of women, compared to other corpora, which tend to conceal them.

---

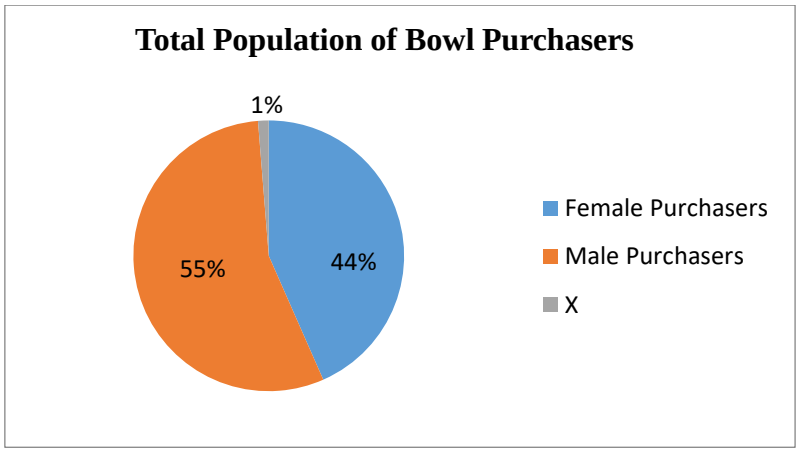
[266] Lesses, "Exe(or)cising Power," 363.
[267] Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion*, (University of Pennsylvania Press 2003) 116.
[268] Lesses, "Exe(or)cising Power," 363. For more about the tradition of matronymic names see, Ilan, *Silencing the Queen*, 251-258.
[269] For example Text M155:10 "This amulet shall be to heal Mahadukh daughter of Neiwanduch… may her belly and interior dry up from menstrual blood… may they dry and nullify the blood from the womb of…" in Levene, "Curse or Blessing" 29**;** Another example is Text No. 13 (CBS 8694) 9: "A virgin travailing and not bearing," Yaakov Elman, "Saffron, Spices, and Sorceresses: Magic Bowls and the Babylonian Talmud," in Kimberly B. Stratton and Dayna S. Kalleres (eds.,) *Daughters of Hecate: Women and Magic in the Ancient World* (Oxford University Press 2014) 365-385 esp. p. 377.
[270] Michael G. Morony, "Magic and Society in Late Sasanian Iraq," 85.
[271] Ibid. 101.
[272] Ilan, *Silencing the Queen*, 233.

Until 2016, a total of 576 incantation bowls had been examined (although many more are known to scholars).[273] In order to determine the gender ratio in the corpus of this study, I collected 296 published incantation bowls selected according to the following criteria:

a. Bowls written in Judeo-Aramaic dialect.
b. Bowls in which the beneficiaries' names can be deciphered.

In this newly assembled selection, we find 171 female purchasers, and 218 male purchasers, which is very close to the typical gender proportions in the magical cosmos.

The following **chart #1** shows the Total Population of Bowl Purchasers.



Some of the incantation bowls were purchased by one person – a man or a woman and some of them display two or more purchasers.

The following **Table # 5** reflects the distribution of the purchasers by gender:

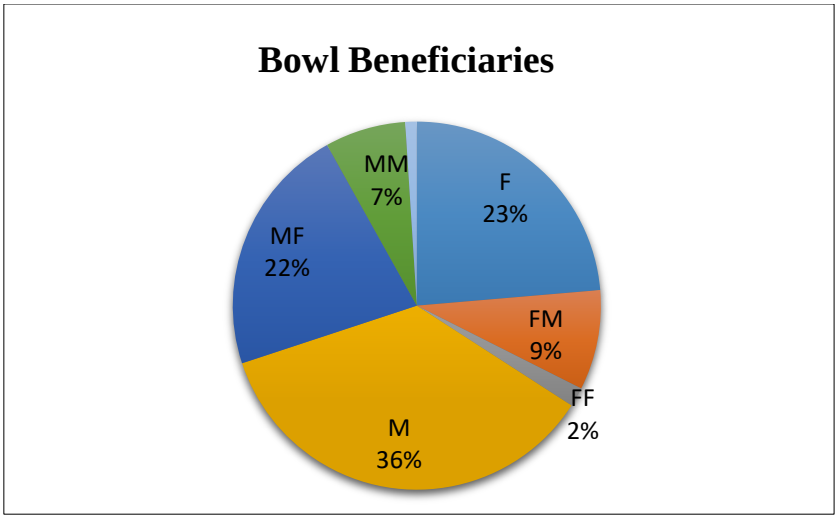
Gender	**Symbol**	**Total**	**%**
One male	M	106	36
One female	F	70	23
A male + a female	MF	65	22
A female + a male	FM	26	9
Two males	MM	21	7
Two females	FF	5	2
Total		293	99

[273] I would like to thank James Nathan Ford for sending me information about the incantation bowls that were published, as well as several forthcoming texts.

From this table it is clear that in 22% of all the cases, where a married couple purchased an incantation bowl together, we see that the name of the man appears first in the incantation formula, followed by the name of his wife and sometimes their offspring too.

Regarding purchases made by a single person of either gender, we see that 106 bowls, 36% – were purchased by a single man, and 70 bowls – 23% of the total incantation bowls, were purchased by a single woman. It should be noted that, despite these figures, it is impossible to tell if a male purchaser did or did not have a woman, who initiated the purchase in order to protect the family and other household members behind him. Another explanation for the higher portion of male purchasers compared to female purchasers, would be that in patriarchal society, most of the financial means of a family were in the man's hands.

Below is **chart #2** showing the division of bowl beneficiaries by gender.



From this data, we learn that when a couple purchased the bowl, the woman is mentioned as the first purchaser in 9% of the bowl acquisitions, followed by her husband and the rest of the offspring. This is also consistent with Morony's research, from the perspective of management of the household. He found that 9% of all bowl purchasers were married women who were running the household themselves, and the entire property was owned by them.[274]

[274] Morony, "Magic and Society in Late Sasanian Iraq," 102.

We can also find a few women who ordered larger quantities of bowls. Mahduch daughter of Newandukh ordered about forty bowls.[275] Another woman, Mihranahid daughter of Aḥat, nicknamed Kuṭus, ordered ten bowls.[276] And a woman by the name of Immi daughter of Qaqay, purchased 5 bowls for herself.[277] These women seem to have been financially independent and able to afford to conduct business such as the acquisition of a bowl. They might have been purchasing bowls for their relatives, or perhaps they owned several houses – it is impossible to know for certain. Another explanation would be that the bowls were purchased over a longer period of time, by members of the same family, who shared the same names (a grandmother and her granddaughter, for instance).[278]

5. Lilith, the Jewish Demoness

The text spiraling along the incantation bowls is a home to a variety of supernatural entities - demons, spirits, monsters, and of course Lilith, the *prima donna* of this enchanted dance surrounding the texts of the incantation bowl. This section discusses the Mesopotamian origins of the Jewish Demoness Lilith, describing the metamorphosis she had to undergo in order to be accepted into Jewish society. Having this gender perspective as a starting point, it is no surprise that the main source of suffering was a female demoness, undermining the foundations of Jewish patriarchal society. Lilith the Demoness, who is at certain times a female entity, and at other times a male incarnation, acts from inside a feminine realm, causing misery to men and women alike. She appears both in the text of the incantation formula, and in the illustration on the base of the bowl. These two complementary media offer a glimpse into Lilith's character and the cultural space within which she operated.

5.1 *The Demoness Lilith as she Appears in the Incantation Formula*

Let me open by quoting Raphael Patai: "No She-Demon has ever achieved as fantastic a career as Lilith."[279] Her glamorous career requires a quick review of her lineage, which is also included in the incantation formula texts, and in some cases in the illustrations on the base of the bowl,

[275] Shaked, "Transmission and Transformation of Spells," 191 note 13.
[276] Shaked, Ford and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 349.
[277] Ibid., 225.
[278] Morony, "Magic and Society in Late Sasanian Iraq,"103.
[279] Raphael Patai, "Lilith," *The Journal of American Folklore* 77 (1964) 295-314 esp. p. 295.

showing her bound in chains. The origins of this "type" of Lilith are three Mesopotamian entities: a trinity of Lilith spirits, the Demoness Lamaštu, and the Goddess Ishtar.[280]

The trinity of Lilith entities – Ardat Lilî, Lilû, and Lilītu – are representations of spirits who are hungry for victims due to their own premature death before experiencing love and sexuality. The spirits were forced to continue to haunt, strike, and wander until the end of time.[281] We can learn a lot about the miseries caused by spirits and demons from the Mesopotamian lexicon of disease already mentioned, "The Diagnostic and Prognostic Handbook." The book describes a syndrome caused by such spirits and demons, referred to as "*Hands-of …*" The Lilith trinity shares the responsibility for sexual assaults, but of these three entities, the male one – *Lilû* – is the only one who hurts babies. This menacing aspect is one which *Lilû* has in common with Ishtar and Lamaštu, as we shall see.

To these Lilith spirits we should also add the goddess Ishtar. Mesopotamian literature portrays her as a young upper-class entity, a restless figure, consumed with frustration, a seductress who is in a constant state of sexual and personal dissatisfaction. In terms of liturgy, she was worshiped as the patron of prostitutes and independent women.[282] "Hand-of-Ishtar" was a syndrome tormenting men and babies, according to "The Diagnostic and Prognostic Handbook."

During the Akkadian period (beginning around 2300 B.C.E.) Ishtar-Inanna is revealed as the Goddess of war, love, and fertility. She is the Goddess whose presence is the most prominent in royal ceremonies,[283] and apparently in the Assyrian period of the first millennium B.C.E. as well, when her name is mentioned in connection with temple liturgy in various cities. This era saw the emergence of an urban form of worshipping the Goddess, and Ishtar became a generic name – Išarātu – the plural form of Ishtar,[284] and began to be referred to as a deity of urban cults. In each city, Ishtar received a different nickname, such as Ishtar of Arbela, or the Lady of Nineveh, and assigned a ritual emphasizing one particular aspect of local culture and customs. The pluralization of Ishtar also made its way to the incantation bowls, in which she appears in the plural form – איסתרתא. In most cases, the Ishtar reflected in the incantation bowls appears as part of a chain of entities who infamously attack both men and women.

[280] Geller, "Tablets and Magic Bowls," 63-70.
[281] Scurlock Joann, "Baby-Snatching Demons," 153-154.
[282] Tzvi Abusch, "Ishtar," in Karl van der Toorn (ed.) *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Leiden Brill 1999) 453.
[283] Brigitte Groneberg, "The Role and Function of Goddesses in Mesopotamia," in Gwendolyn Leick (ed.), *The Babylonian World* (Routledge 2007) 319-331 esp. p. 322.
[284] Abusch, "Ishtar," 453.

Another recurring element in the tradition of Ishtar is the blurring of the boundaries between the world of the living and the world of the dead. The tradition, according to which Ishtar travelled between these two worlds, is revealed not only between the lines of the cuneiform inscriptions, but also on graves, where some iconographies imply that the Goddess provided food and wealth to the dead.[285]

A final, dominant aspect in the essence of the Jewish Lilith was derived from the Demoness Lamaštu. This demoness is characterized by a distinct personality and distinguishable looks, quite uncommon considering the general tendency of the Mesopotamian cosmos to portray vague images of demons and spirits.

Lamaštu comes from a heavenly lineage.[286] Punished for her evil acts, she was expelled from her celestial residence. On earth, she chose to reside up in the mountains, in the swamps, on the prairie, or in the desert.[287] Lamaštu was an entity who was all about rage. Some of her trademarks are unruly hair with a frill, a bare chest, breasts filled with venom, and ripped clothes.[288] The "Hand-of-Lamaštu" syndrome's only goal was hurting babies, before, during, and after delivery. She would suck the bone marrow out of the babies and cause suffering to men. I will elaborate later on the way Lamaštu appears in the incantation bowls, when we come to discuss the magic illustrations. Approaching the middle of the first millennium B.C.E., the similarity of the Lilith trilogy, Ishtar, and Lamaštu, created a unity, a consolidation of a goddess, a demoness, and a spirit, and their qualities trickled into the image of the Jewish Lilith.[289]

During the Sasanian era, the name of the Jewish demoness was familiar and known, unlike the general names of other supernatural entities like evil spirits - רוחתא בישתא; afflictions - פגעין; and *dēvs* - דיוין. The personal, almost familial, acquaintance with Lilith intensified the fear of her. The Jewish Lilith is a seductress, sucking the essence of life out of babies. Her external image is the same as that of Lamaštu. She reveals herself as a feminine character with long, unruly hair, and bare breasts. In the transition from Mesopotamian to Jewish culture, Lilith gained plenty of

[285] For more see Caitlin E. Barrett, "Was Dust Their Food and Clay Their Bread? Gravegoods, the Mesopotamian Afterlife, and the Liminal Role of Inana/Ishtar," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 7 (2007) 7-65.
[286] F.A.M. Wiggermann, "Lamastu, Daughter of Anu: A Profile," in Marten Stol (ed.), *Birth in Babylonia and the Bible: Its Mediterranean Setting* (Groningen 2000) 217-253 esp. p. 217.
[287] Walter Farber, *Lamaštu* (Eisenbrauns 2014) 17.
[288] Ibid., 155.
[289] More about the assimilation between Lamaštu, Lilîtu and Lilû see ibid., 224-236.

nicknames, some of which hint of her acts. The key to exorcising the demoness was also inherited from Mesopotamian tradition, which is evident in the knowledge of all of Lilith's names and nicknames.[290]

Here are some of the names or attributes which often appear together with Lilith's name in the incantation bowls. They reflect the inherent suffering inflicted by her.

- ליליתא בישתא – evil Lilith[291]
- קטולתא ברת קטולתא – Murderess, daughter of murderess[292]
- ...דאית בפגריה דה דין – which are in the body of…[293]
- שלניתא וחטפיתא – the grabber and the snatcher [294]
- זמרתא זניתא לילית – singing-whore, the Lilith [295]
- ומידמין לבני אינשא לגברי בדמות נשי ולנשי בדמות גברי ועים בני אינשא שכבין בליליה וביממא "who appear to mankind, to men in the likeness of women and to women in the likeness of men, and with mankind they lie by night and by day " [296]
- דלילית דבת בית להון Liliths that dwells in their house as a member of it.[297]

Lilith's name appears in many of the incantation bowls. Sometimes the purpose of the bowl is to expel her, in which case Lilith is the center of the formula. In other instances, she is mentioned as part of a chain of various supernatural entities, and at times she appears in the same text two or three times, or more. The fact that Lilith is mentioned multiple times in the incantation formula reflects her popularity in Jewish culture during the first centuries A.D, and until the Muslim conquests. There are some formulae in which she is not mentioned at all, and yet her presence in the bowl is implied by the contents, nicknames, illustrations of the demoness, as well as some typical acts associated with her.

We can try to estimate how popular demoness Lilith was, by reviewing the number of times she is mentioned in incantation formulae. For this purpose, I chose three bowl collections found in three separate books, which sample three different genres: Bowls discovered *in situ*, in Nippur, where the local population used incantation bowls from several different genres. This collection

[290] Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 69.
[291] Text Montgomery 15 (CBS 16087):6 ibid., 185.
[292] Text Montgomery 36 (CBS 2933):2 ibid., 238.
[293] Text Montgomery 19 (CBS 16018):15 ibid., 195.
[294] Text JBA 62 (MS 2053/242):2 Shaked, Ford and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 268.
[295] Text JBA 50 (MS 2053/207):9 ibid., 226.
[296] Text Montgomery 1 (CBS 8693):12-13 Montgomery, Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur 117.
[297] Text Montgomery 1 (CBS 8693):6 Ibid.

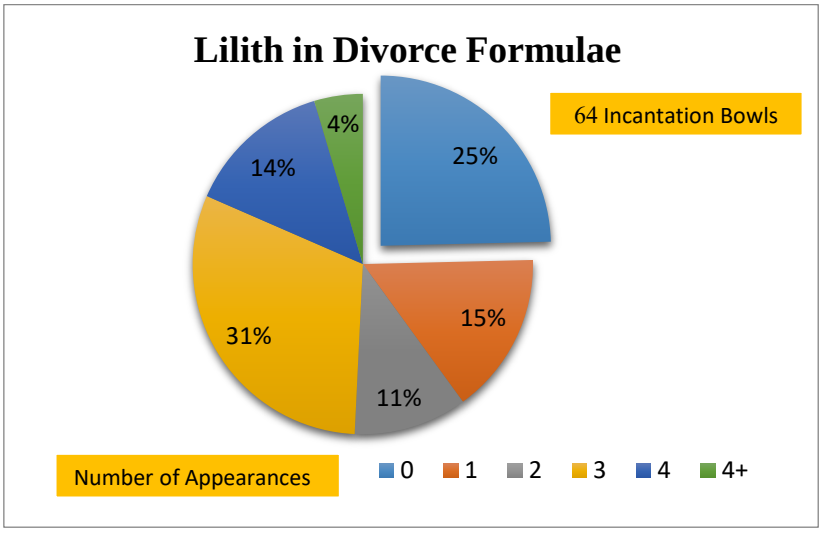
reflects directly on Lilith's popularity among regular users of incantation bowls. In contrast to this "organic" collection, the two other bowl collections were chosen deliberately. I decided to examine the genres of divorce bowls, and of curse bowls. The three collections should help us trace Lilith's patterns of appearance in each of these genres. As a by-product, dividing the findings into these categories is also helpful in describing the community of the incantation-bowl users in terms of gender and family status.

The following are the collections which would be examined:

- **Divorce Formulae** – a collection of incantation bowls from the Schøyen Collection which is a compilation of divorce-formulae bowls found in one collection: *Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls*, by Shaked, Ford and Bhayro.
- **Curse Formulae** – a collection of incantation bowls from the Moussaieff Collection – a compilation of curse-formulae bowls, most of which contain the name of the person sending out the curse. The formulae were assembled by Dan Levene, in his book Jewish *Aramaic Curse Texts from Late-Antique Mesopotamia*.
- **Various Genres** – found in the incantation bowls discovered in the archaeological excavations in Nippur, *in situ*, taken from Montgomery's book *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*.

5.1.1 Lilith in Divorce Formulae

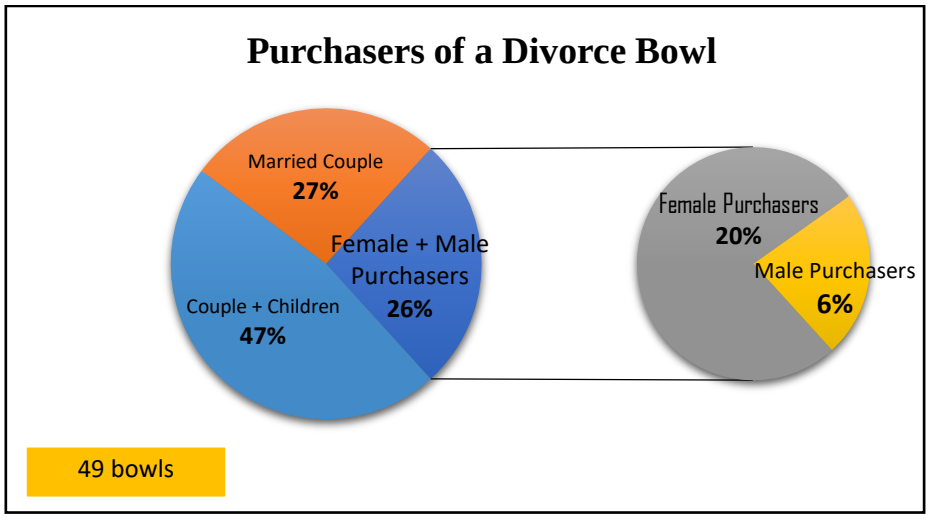
Below is **Chart #3** showing the number of appearances of Lilith in divorce formulae.



The collection of divorce formulae consists of 64 incantation bowls intended to exorcise the demoness from the body and home of the bowl beneficiaries. Lilith appears in 75% of the bowls. In some cases, her name appears once (15%), in some twice (11%). Sometimes, as in the 25% of the collection of divorce formulae, her name does not show up at all, but her trademarks in some texts and illustrations point to her being the target of the exorcism even in these bowls, and on this I will speak in the next section, when I discuss the illustrations. We can also see that in most cases (31%), Lilith is mentioned three times, in a manner which is adapted to the divorce formula. The name of the exorcised demoness is repeated so as to verify the formula, listing her different names and known nicknames. As the format of the divorce document requires for the women being divorced, the names of the demoness' parents are also specified (which I will elaborate when I discuss Komiš Daughter of Mahlafta, one of the female authors of the incantation bowls). In a few incantation formulae, Lilith's name appears four times or more.

In order to reveal the gender and family status of the divorce-bowl purchasers, I used 49 of the 64 bowls, in which Lilith appears in the incantation formula, and the names of the purchasers can be deciphered.

Below is a **Chart#4** showing the division of divorce-bowl purchasers by gender and family status.



Lilith the Demoness is popular among married couples, with or without children. Most of the bowls (74%) were purchased by people from this section of the population. Families with children purchased the highest number of bowls (47%). A closer look at the married couples

purchasing the divorce bowl reveals some cases where the woman's name precedes the man's. This is a phenomenon we already witnessed when we inspected the gender of the purchasers. In 9% of the cases, the name of the woman comes first, implying that she was also the one in charge of the household management. [298] It seems that the percentage of independent women (20%) who chose to purchase divorce incantation bowls containing references to Lilith, is relatively higher compared to the general women's population of bowl-purchasers.
Other statistics which should be discussed are the 26% of single men and women purchasing divorce-bowls featuring Lilith. These were comprised of 20% female purchases and 6% men – an advantage to women, from a gender perspective. Some women purchased multiple bowls. It seems that many women believed in the efficacy of the magical get formula in the expulsion of Lilith. The use of familiar legal terminology created a concept of magic and medicine that was considered most successful among the female purchasers.

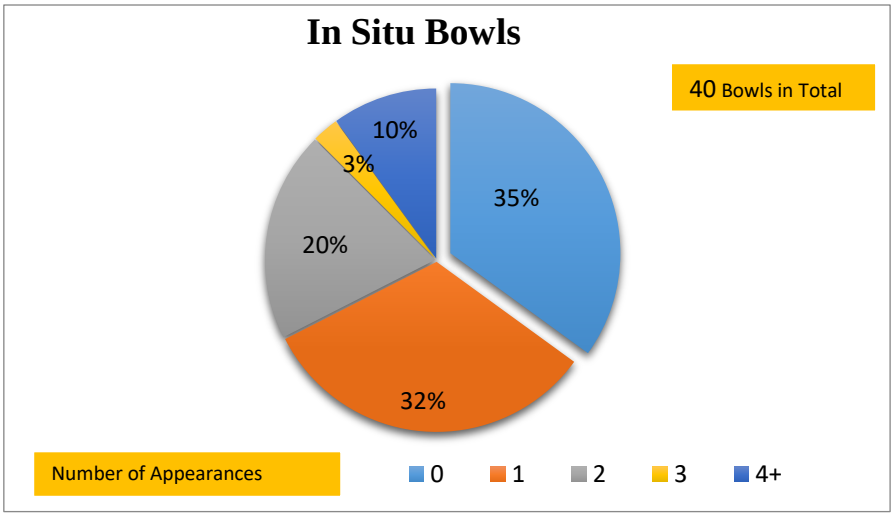
5.1.2 Curse Formulae

Lilith is mentioned in only 23% of the 30 incantation bowls collected by Dan Levene. This genre of incantation bowls was intended to revert a curse to a certain person, specified by name as part of the incantation formula. An entity by the name of Yaror features in most of the incantation bowls in this curse category, 77% of them to be exact. Lilith the Demoness is not presented as a main protagonist in the curse bowls, and was apparently not recruited for this purpose. In the bowls that do feature her name, there is a completely different pattern than the one we found in the divorce genre. Her name is only mentioned a single time, as one link in the chain of evil spirits.

5.1.3 Various Genres in Nippur

The following Chart #5 is a division of the incantation formula from Nippur, according to the number of times Lilith appears in them.

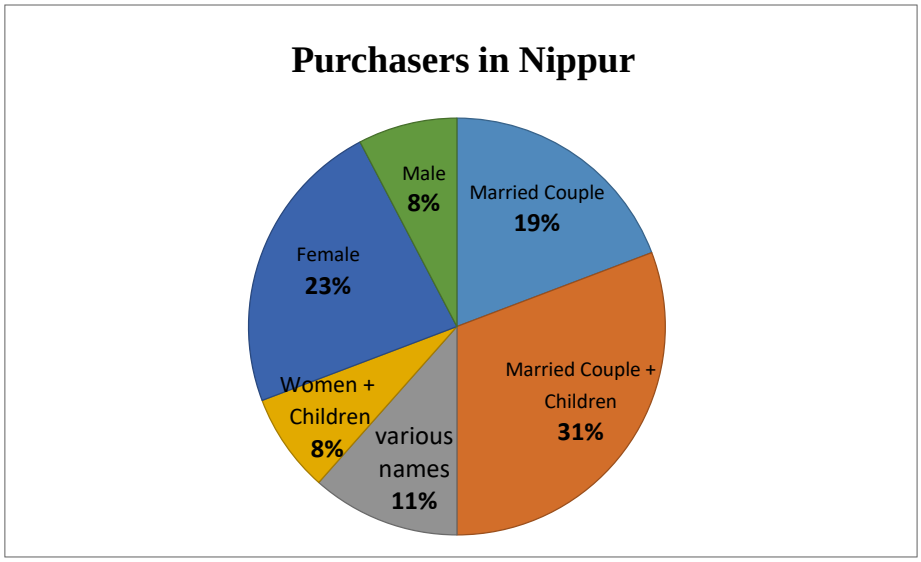
[298] Morony, "Magic and Society in Late Sasanian Iraq," 102.



The incantation bowls found buried under the thresholds of houses in Nippur, include a mixture of different genres of formulae, such as divorce or curse formulae, formulae with Mesopotamian influences, and formulae written in the first person. Lilith is mentioned in 65% of the 40 bowls.[299] She usually appears once (32%), sometimes within a chain of entities. In some cases, she is mentioned twice (20%), and even four times or more (10%). When we discussed the divorce genre, we noticed the tendency to mention her names three times in the incantation formula (31%), suited for the methods used for divorce documents. The bowls from Nippur, however, only have one case in which Lilith appears three times, and that bowl also belongs to the divorce genre.[300] The popularity of Lilith the Demoness is reflected in the repeated mention of her name, a repetition which is not witnessed with other entities appearing in the incantation formula.

Chart # **6** shows the division of the Nippur residents purchasing the bowls, by family status and gender.

[299] I count 40 of the 42 bowls in the book. Text 41 (CBS 179) was written on a skull, and bowl 42 is not physically available. See Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 256; 258.
[300] Text Montgomery 8 (CBS 9013) ibid., 154.



Lilith is mentioned in the majority of the 40 bowls discovered in Nippur (65%). Some of the bowls that lack her name contain hints of her presence, through contents and illustrations. From the family aspect, half of the Nippur-bowls were purchased by families, whereby a married couple who had children tended to purchase more bowls, compared to a couple without children (31% and 19%, respectively). One of the interesting findings from Nippur is a bowl purchased by a woman by the name of Metâniŝ, who was an innkeeper. The bowl she purchased was intended to protect herself as well as her guests. Regarding gender, only 8% of the male purchasers whose name is the only one in the formula, purchased bowls for protection against Lilith. A bowl featuring Lilith was apparently more popular among women, with 31% of these bowls purchased by women, and 8% intended for the protection of a woman along with her children.

5.2 *The Demoness Lilith as Part of the Concept of Magic Illustrations*

Part of the magical identity of the incantation bowl is the illustrated presence of ominous entities on the base of the bowl. The bowls feature illustrations which fit a standard scheme of demons' representation.[301] Judging by the type of ink used, the width of the brush, and the strokes, the illustrations were drawn by the authors of the bowls.[302] In the working process, the illustration came before writing the text.[303] Sometimes the figure in the illustration is enclosed in a magic circle. The illustrations usually show one anthropomorphic figure in frontal view, either naked

[301] Naama Vilozny, *Figure and Image in Magic and Popular Art between Babylonia and Palestine during the Roman and Byzantine Periods* (Ph.D. Diss. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem 2010) 231. (Hebrew)
[302] Ibid., 366.
[303] Ibid., 166.

or clothed, and usually in chains. The legs of the figure are usually spread open, its hands are stretched out, and its fingers spread. The head of the figure is facing forward, with the eyes wide open, and disproportionally large. The figure's hair is usually messy, and its head is sometimes decorated with a mitre, or crown-shaped tiara. The illustrations apparently follow a gender scheme, on which I will elaborate later.[304] The figures also had personal attributions influenced by intracultural elements.[305]

Image #1
Incantation bowl Montgomery 14

Most of the illustrations portray demons or spirits, both male and female. The figure sometimes had additional animal characteristics, like horns, claws, pointy ears or a tail.[306] The gender identity of the figure is usually unclear. Elements like clothing articles or hair length supply a few clues. The sexuality of some naked figures remains equally vague. Male sex organs sticking out may seem like completely detached objects. Female sex organs were drawn as a triangle (see image # 3 below). Female breasts were easier to recognize in the few bowls in which they appear,[307] as is the case with the emphasized breasts in this bowl. (Image #1).[308]

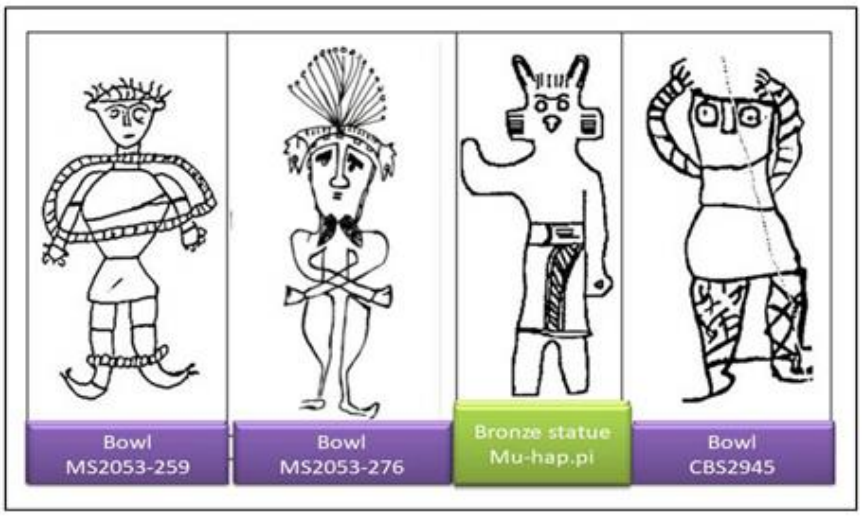
It should be noted that the illustration on the base of the bowl is neither a source of information nor an ornamental feature. Rather, it complements a text rendering supernatural entities powerless, and reinforces it as a magical motif, especially if we assume that the aesthetics of the illustrations was familiar to the bowl purchasers, and common in the context of the magical cosmos. The illustration also adds to the weirdness and vagueness typical of the magic medium.[309]

---

[304] Vilozny, *Figure and Image in Magic*, 193.
[305] Hunter, "Who are the Demons?" 97.
[306] Vilozny, "The Art of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls, 30.
[307] Vilozny, *Figure and Image in Magic*, 190.
[308] Text Montgomery 14 (CBS 16917) *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 359.
Image #1- courtesy of the Penn Museum.
[309] Michael D. Swartz, "The Aesthetics of Blessing and Cursing: Literary and Iconographic Dimensions of Hebrew and Aramaic Blessing and Curse texts," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 5 (2005) 187-211 Esp. pp. 201-202.

A review of the variety of illustrated figures reveals the similarity between them and the figurines which had previously played a role in Mesopotamian exorcism rituals against witches and witchcraft. The magical act performed on the figurines played a significant role in causing a change in the reality of the Mesopotamian clients. Some of the figurines were subsequently burnt, and their ashes scattered, while others were buried, but disintegrated with time, due to the materials of which they were made.[310] Thus, we are left with no visual evidence. Nevertheless, the verbal descriptions of the making of the figurine, dressing it, and applying the accessories and chains to it,[311] revels a marked resemblance to the illustrated figures on the incantation bowls. In my personal opinion, during the process of transition from one culture to the other, and from one medium to the other, a metamorphosis occurred in which the number of dimensions was reduced from three to two, turning the figurines into the flat figures we see on the base of the incantation bowl.

To make this statement a bit less theoretical and more tangible, here is an example (Illustration 1) of a bronze figurine of an evil Babylonian demon called Mu-ḫap.pi [312] which has been transformed, with a little help from designer Salit Krac, and by the grace of the Internet Gods, from 3D into a flat drawing.[313] Now, in his new 2D appearence, he is standing among the rest of the bowl's images.



One of the most important figurative elements is the chaining. The illustrated figures often show up with both its hands and its legs chained. The legs are cuffed with either a chain or a rope, while the hands are tied crossed over the chest. The magic act of chaining the misery-causing entities described in the

[310] Text *Maqlû* I: 135–143 Abusch, *The Witchcraft Series Maqlû*, 18.
[311] JoAnn Scurlock, *Magico-Medical Means of Treating Ghost-Induced Illnesses in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Leiden: Brill/Styx 2006) 50.
[312] Figure U4.GAL, R. Campbell Thompson, *The Devils and Evil Spirits of Babylonia* (London: Luzac and Co. 1904) VI.
[313] I would like to thank Salit Krac for the transformation of the figurine into the 2D image.

text is intensified by the illustration, as an act of sympathetic magic, or as a simulacrum which represents demons and spirits in general, and those mentioned in the magic text in particular.[314] The illustration of the threatening figure was likely part of a repertoire of illustrated figures in the local magic tradition.[315] In addition to the chaining, some of the figures are missing their mouths.[316] This is also an element aimed at inverting a curse, put by demons and spirits, by cancelling out its words, which had served as much more than just a communicational function.[317] Removing the mouth cancels the words, and with them the act itself vanishes.

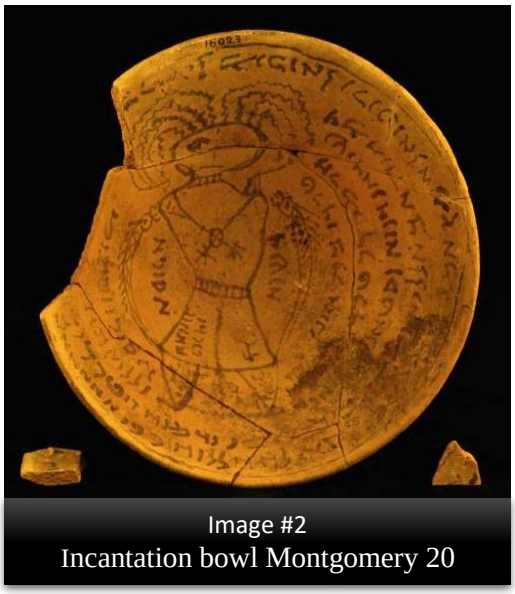


Image #2
Incantation bowl Montgomery 20

Reinforcing the text with an illustration is demonstrated clearly in a bowl purchased by a woman by the name of Tradi daughter of Oni (Image #2).[318] The incantation formula in the bowl is short in contents. In contrast, the illustration – sizable and bursting into the text – is rich with detail. The feminine entity is a representation of Lilith the Demoness mentioned in the text. Her legs are cuffed, her hands are tied crossed over her chest, and wings grow out of her shoulders. The wings, neck, and hems of her skirt form a magic circle.[319] The area between the wings and the body is filled with the words אסורא – bound/prohibited – on the right side, and רשוא – released/permitted – on the left. The bottom part contains the name of the woman who was the beneficiary. This terminology used between the wings and the name of the beneficiary are references to the way the tormenting entity is exorcised by the divorce formulae. The circle grants the woman beneficiary protection against Lilith the Demoness in the text. It is a representation of the demoness having no power over her, since she is shielded by the bowl.[320]

[314] Hunter, "Who are the Demons?" 96.
[315] Vilozny, *Figure and Image in Magic*, 343.
[316] Ibid., 195.
[317] Shaked, "The Poetics of Spells," 174.
[318] Text Montgomery 20 (CBS 16023) Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 201.
Image #2 -courtesy of the Penn Museum.
[319] Some scholars identify the wings as Ouroboros, e.g. Swartz, "The Aesthetics of Blessing and Cursing," 200. An example of the exact and defined Ouroboros, one finds in Text Montgomery 15 (CBS 16087) Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 185; Naama Vilozny identifies the wings as snakes, see Vilozny, *Figure and Image in Magic*, 61.
[320] Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 201.

The illustrated figure has two physical attributes linking her to the Jewish Lilith, as she appears in the Babylonian Talmud – long haired ("grows her hair long like Lilith" – *bEruv* 100b); and winged ("If an abortion had the likeness of Lilith, its mother is unclean by reason of the birth, for it is a child, but it has wings" – *bNid* 24b). The combination of these two elements, together with the reference to the divorce text, hint at the essence of Lilith. The divorce genre was considered effective in expelling the demoness, as we saw in the discussion of the Jewish Lilith.

Another hint about the figure on the base of the bowl being Lilith, is the snake shape wings, one of the typical attributes of Lamaštu, of whom Lilith is a descendent (see discussion above). Lamaštu appears in some Mesopotamian amulets for protection of babies, holding two snakes in her hands.[321] Lilith is also standing in a menacing pose which is typical of Lamaštu as she appears on amulets. Another sign typical of Lamaštu is a triangle enclosed in a square.[322] The Jewish Lilith appears to have this in common with her too. Her crossed hands form a triangle inside the square shape of her body. (see image #2).

Image #3
Incantation bowl Montgomery 8

Another instance in which Lilith appears on the base of the incantation bowl belongs to the divorce genre and was purchased by Geyonai son of Mamai and his wife Rasnoi daughter of Marath (Image #3).[323] The entity exorcized is Lilith, who is mentioned multiple times in the text. The illustrated figure drawn on the base of the bowl has three body parts which are bound: the neck is in a collar, the hands are tied across the chest, and the legs are in chains. As with the previous bowl, this figure also displays two physical attributes linking her to the Jewish demoness Lilith. This variant of Lilith lacks wings, but is naked and her hair is long and uncovered. The sex organ is exposed and emphasized. She has no mouth, as a sign of a cancellation of her words. Trademarks typical of Lamaštu are nudity and the crossed hands forming a triangle over her chest, inside the square

[321] Wiggermann, "Lamastu, Daughter of Anu: A Profile," 221.
[322] Ibid.
[323] Text Montgomery 8 (CBS 9013) Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 154.
Image #3 - courtesy of the Penn Museum.

of her body. The metal collar around Lilith's neck is a typical attribute, described in a ritual for protection of a baby against Lamaštu.[324]

Finally, the figure of the Demoness Lilith painted on the incantation bowls is rich, compared to her few mentions in the Babylonian Talmud. A view of Lilith through a rabbinical male prism reveals a female demoness influenced by their conception of women and the various attributes associated with them. Lilith the Demoness serves as the antithesis to the married, "kosher" Jewish woman. In her nudity and long, unruly hair, she is the embodiment of fatal danger to all men, a threat which revolves around sex and impurity. The wings of the demoness, another motif emphasized in Lilith's talmudic image, intensify the level of danger she poses, due to the blurred lines between the godly and the demonic realm.[325] Lilith of rabbinic literature is a warning sign for men. Lilith of the incantation bowls too is a symbol of everyday existential fears but experienced by both men and women. The figure of Lilith shakes the family unit, and statistical data verifies this, with half of the incantation bowls found in Nippur being purchased by families, with or without children. Women also found comfort in Lilith's incantation bowls as statistics prove that women, presumable independent ones, were responsible for purchasing 31% of the Nippur incantation bowls.

It should also be noted that, together with the danger reflected in Lilith's destructive acts, the incantation formula targeting her contains a mix of magical and medicinal conceptions. Further, Lilith the Demoness is never an active participant in the curse-genre bowls. This means that no composer of the incantation bowls uses her specifically to hurt someone else. An incantation bowl aimed at the exorcism of Lilith the Demoness covers the protection of the clients, their family, and their property, and indeed, 74% of the divorce-genre bowls were purchased by families. The incantation formulae, especially those which belong to the divorce-genre, do not only heal the clients – women, children, and men – of disease and torment, but also act as an insurance policy that guarantees an improvement of their fortune by preventing the return of Lilith and the rest of evil spirits and demons, into the house from which they were exorcised.

[324] Text BM51246:10-13 Scurlock, "Medicine and Healing Magic," 127.
[325] "Six things were said about demons—in three (things) they are like the angels…" (b*Hag* 16a).

6. Burial of Incantation Bowls

The last subject I would like to touch upon in this section is a review of the burial of the incantation bowls, through a magical prism.

Mesopotamian elements had infiltrated Judaism during a thousand years of Jewish settlement in Babylonia.[326] They are revealed between the lines of the Babylonian Talmud, and even more clearly in the incantation bowls. There is a similarity between the spiraling texts of the bowls and Mesopotamian magic texts, burial being just one example.[327] The burial of the bowl resembles a tradition of burial of figurines with magical qualities, under public buildings and private residences.[328] Archaeological excavations have uncovered clay figurines of supernatural entities, buried under palaces. The same figurines also appear in reliefs and stamp seals. Under regular houses small apotropaic figurines were also found buried inside bricks of clay – either fired or not – in a container, or in clay jars.[329] The figurines themselves were sundried only, and not fired. These clay figurines, from the first half of the first millennium B.C.E., are similar to each other, and feature similar iconography to that used in tablets containing ritual texts, which were buried alongside them. The figurines have hybrids traits, each of them a mixture of a human being and an animal, such as fish, bird, or dog. The text states that these are aimed at diverting evil and illness away from the building and its inhabitants.[330]

The "Ritual to block the entry of the enemy into someone's house" is one example of many reflecting the tradition of protecting the house through burial of magical artefacts. This ritual entailed sculpting and carving of 34 clay, wood, and wax figurines, the formation of which was an integral part of the magic act. The purpose of the figurines was to protect and guard those inhabiting the house against the intrusion of demons and spirits. They were painted in diverse colors and had their names written over their shoulders. At the end of the ritual, the figurines were buried under the threshold of the house, in its rooms, hallway, courtyard, and in the water spout.[331] The incantation bowls discovered *in situ* in Nippur and surrounding cities, were buried

[326] Erica Hunter, "Incantation Bowls: A Mesopotamian Phenomenon?" *Orientalia, Nova Series* 65 (1996) 220-233 esp. p. 226.
[327] Ibid., 220.
[328] Ibid., 226.
[329] Anthony Green, "Neo-Assyrian Apotropaic Figures," *Iraq* 45 (1983) 87-96 esp. p. 87.
[330] Ibid.
[331] Text VAT 8228, Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 46-47.

face down, under the threshold, close to the ground.[332] Some bowls were buried inside the walls, also facing down. In a few cases, bowls were excavated which were stacked on top of each other, as well as bowl-pairs glued together with bitumen.[333] The paired bowls also have an ancient Mesopotamian tradition behind them. Beginning in the third millennium B.C.E., and up until the days of the Achaemenid dynasty (539-331 B.C.E.), it was a common practice to bury pairs of textless bowls next to the walls, near the entrance to house. These bowls were apparently filled with offerings aimed at preventing disease and bad luck. The incantation bowls might be considered variants of those apotropaic bowls.[334]

I will now elaborate on these two methods of burial – the inverted bowl, facing down, and the burial in pairs, with the bowls glued to each other by the rim with bitumen.

6.1 *Burial of Bowls Facing Down*

Much speculation was given regarding the significance and purpose of the burial of an incantation bowl facing down. Here are some assumptions:

- **Trap** – The bowl served as a trap for the demons, who were incarcerated in the space created by it, and confined in the area delineated by the space and the magic text.[335]
- **Magic circle** – The rim of the upside-down bowl acted as a double-purpose magic circle – to exorcise demons and spirits, and to protect the house.[336]
- **Residential exchange** – The use of the household utensil and flipping it upside-down represented the residential sphere squeezed into the bowl. This is a form of ritual analogy, in which the bowl becomes a space for the demons to inhabit, instead of the space intended for the residents of the house themselves. The intrusion into the living space was exchanged with the space created inside the bowl.[337]
- **Magic act** – The flipping of the bowl works according to the principles of sympathetic magic by similarity. By flipping the bowl exorcism is enabled.[338]

All these assumption are actually pieces of the same Mesopotamian tradition. I will patch together the elements mentioned thus far, linking them to ancient Mesopotamian ritualistic

[332] Morony, "Magic and Society in Late Sasanian Iraq," 95.
[333] Ibid.
[334] Lesses, "Exe(or)cising Power," 345, note no. 2.
[335] Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 41.
[336] Ibid., 42.
[337] David Frankfurter, "Scorpion/Demon: On the Origin of the Mesopotamian Apotropaic Bowl," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 74 (2015) 9-18 esp. p. 13.
[338] Hunter, "Incantation Bowls: A Mesopotamian Phenomenon?" 231.

traditions, perceptions of the structure of the cosmos, and understanding of spirits as dwellers of the Netherworld.

Within the magical cosmos, the spirits dwell in the Netherworld, and in order to get there, one has to walk a path leading to the gates of the land of the dead. According to the epos "Inana's descent to the nether world," getting to the Netherworld was possible by walking on the bank of a river. All mortals pass this path, referred to as "The road of no return". There is no knowing whether this road was a direct path to the gates of the world of the deads, or whether one still had to go through the Ḫubur River[339] to get to the gate, or to a series of seven gates.[340] The dead had to cross the gate/s, while the spirits had an alternative path open for them. The Mesopotamian assumed that the cosmos had cracks connecting the Netherworld and the face of the earth. These cracks allow the horizontal passage of spirits, if we assume that this Netherworld is found in deserted areas; and a vertical passage from the land of the dead into the land of living, if we assume that the Netherworld is found up in the mountains,[341] or down on an underground cosmic level. The cracks are paths between openings or windows in both these worlds.[342] In this manner, spirits are able to travel between the realms without having to pass the gates of the Netherworld. Such cracks appear in various epic works. For instance, in the Epic of Gilgamesh, the Sumerian king digs a path to the Netherworld, and Enkidu, who is already in a spirit-state, is able to rise through it.[343] The cracks leading to the land of the dead are described as haunted by demons, and the *Surpu* ritual against witchcraft features a demon puncturing the skin of the earth, like a sprouting plant.[344]

This tradition of cracks connecting the two realms is a clue to deciphering the purpose of turning the bowl upside down. The spells in the formula written on the incantation bowl deport the spirits back to their Netherworld residence. The turning of the bowl was an act of sympathetic magic conducted in three steps:

- **Burial of the bowl facing down** – The rim of the bowl formed a magic circle, like the one drawn in flour by the Mesopotamian exorcist, the *āšipu*. This circle defines an area preventing the spirit from returning to the body or the residence of the bowl beneficiaries.

[339] Wayne Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* (Eisenbrauns 1998) 353.
[340] Ibid., 358.
[341] For a discussion about the mountains as the domain of the dead see Dina Katz, "Death They Dispensed to Mankind the Funerary World of Ancient Mesopotamia," *Historiae* 2 (2005) 55-90 esp. pp. 77-79.
[342] Ibid., 360.
[343] Gilgamesh Tablet XII: 83-84, Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*, 360.
[344] Ibid., 361.

- **Confinement of the spirit** – As a result of the formation of the magic circle, the spirit is trapped inside the temporary space created by the bowl, and the labyrinth of the spiral text is aimed at weakening the spirit, leading it outwards, until it exits the bowl.[345] The process of trapping the spirit recreates the funeral ceremonies customary in Mesopotamian tradition.[346] This ritual is known as "blow away the wind" and was intended to loosen the spirit from the body, and send it into the Netherworld.[347] At the end of the ceremony, the dead body was buried under the house floor, and the burial offerings were passed to the body's new residence through tubes running from the ground into the grave.[348] A sensitive liminal time was understood to take place from the moment of death, during which the soul is transformed from "wind" to "ghost" [349] - until burial. In this time, it was essential to provide a specific alternative locus for the soul. This temporary residence for the spirit was supplied by an effigy of the deceased which was then buried as well. [350] As in the Mesopotamian funeral ceremony, the space that the incantation bowl created, when turned upside down, provided temporary housing for the spirit. The images at the base of the magic bowl functioned like the effigy. The transformation from cuneiform to Aramaic writing flattened the sculpture and turned it into a two-dimensional illustration.
- **Passage of the spirit into the Netherworld** – The state created by the magic circle coerced the spirit to proceed in one direction only – from the bowl serving as its temporary residence, through the cracks connecting the realms, and on to the Netherworld. The connection between the world of the living and that of the dead was also established in a concrete manner, through architectural construction.[351] The foundations of the palace were used as an *axis mundi*.[352] The base of the pillars was perceived as anchored in the land of the dead. Also, the foundations of regular private residences and buildings were perceived as set in the Netherworld. The burial of the incantation bowl with its face down, on the threshold of the

[345] Shaked, Ford and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 16.
[346] Already Thomas Ellis connected funeral ceremonies with the incantation bowls, see Charles D. Isbell, "The Story of the Aramaic Magical Incantation Bowls," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 41/1 (1978) 5-16 esp. p. 7.
[347] Joann Scurlock, "Soul Emplacements in Ancient Mesopotamian Funerary Rituals," in Leda Ciraolo and Jonathan Seidel (eds.) *Magic and Divination in the Ancient World* (Leiden Brill 2002) 1-5 esp. p. 1.
[348] Ibid., 3.
[349] Katz, "Death They Dispensed to Mankind the Funerary World of Ancient Mesopotamia," 72.
[350] Ibid., 2. More about the effigy see Dina Katz, "Sumerian Funerary Rituals in Context," in Nicola Laneri, (ed.) *Performing Death: Social Analyses of Funerary Traditions in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean* (University of Chicago 2008) 167-188 esp. pp. 169.
[351] Renata MacDougal, *Remembrance and the Dead in Second Millennium BC Mesopotamia* (Ph.D. Diss. University of Leicester 2014) 29-30.
[352] For more about the *Axis mundi* see Mircea Eliade , *Images and Symbols* (Princeton 1991) 48-51.

house or the room, inside the walls or in corners, exorcised the spirit, on one hand, and protected the residents of the house, on the other.

6.2 *Burial in Pairs*

Up to now, we have examined the upside-down burial of incantation bowls. A different kind of burial is also known to us. Two bowls were buried together, facing one another, and glued together by their rims with bitumen.[353]

The burial of a pair of bowls represent a different type of incantation – the curse genre. Its essence is the idea of counter-charms or *qybl'* (קיבלא) in Aramaic. As a result of its content, the 'curse bowl' dictated a different kind of interment. The *qybl'* formula is one of self-designation and it describes the purpose of the bowl by sentences like "This is a charm to overturn sorceries and vows and curses and afflictions and rites from X against Y." [354] The name of the curser and the name of the cursed were part of the incantation. [355]

The purpose of this genre, then, was to send back a curse that was delivered by a living individual, whose name was known. It was also used against witches and witchcraft. In such cases, it made no sense to bury the magic bowl upside down, in order to send an evil spirit back to the Netherworld. According to Mesopotamian understanding, curses and witchcraft were a physical substance that could, on the one hand, be washed off like a stain, and on the other hand, be transferred to another person.[356] This concept of a curse as a transferable substance was used in the incantation bowls. The purpose of the pair of bowls glued to each other then, was to return the curse. In this condition all curses and witchcrafts were sealed and restricted and were sent back as a physical item to the sender.

The pair of curse bowls was interlocked rim to rim by bitumen and by a cord which was coiled twice around the bowls and glued in six spots with globules of bitumen. [357]According to Dan

[353] Levene, *Jewish Aramaic Curse Texts from Late-Antique Mesopotamia,* 12**;** Hilprecht mentioned this kind of burial in Excavation in Calnehe (Kulunu), see Herman Vollrat Hilprecht, et al. *Explorations in the Bible Lands during the 19th Century* (Philadelphia A. J. Holman, 1903) 447.
[354] Levene, *Jewish Aramaic Curse Texts from Late-Antique Mesopotamia,* 2.
[355] Ibid., 9. See for example the pair: Text VA.2484 and Text VA.2509, 20-34.
[356] Abusch and Schwemer, *Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Rituals,* 2-3.
[357] Levene, *Jewish Aramaic Curse Texts from Late-Antique Mesopotamia,* 11.

Levene the word *qybl'* – קיבלא – also means darkness;[358] which is one of three Mesopotamian elements that are related to the curse bowls, the other two being: the returning of a curse and the *Maqlû* ritual against a witch and against witchcraft.

There seems to be a link between the three elements: the witch, the reversal of the curse, and the ritual to expel the witches. Rituals aimed to banish witchcraft were performed in Mesopotamia by the power of exchange of fortunes. Disease and misery sent in the direction of the victim were returned to the sender, and the fate of the latter became that of the former. This pattern of a ritual against witchcraft was based on a mirror image of the witchcraft, and the witch herself accused of practicing contagion magic.[359] As said above, the guilty party was always the witch, and the identification of the victim was conducted with stereotypical gender premises. Even when the ritual text mentioned sorcerers in plural form, and when the healer created figurines in male and female forms, the text recited by the patient blames the witch for the sufferings, while the male sorcerer is never mentioned.[360]

One of the rituals against witches and witchcraft was the Maqlû ritual, the essence of which was the creation of a figurine, or a pair of male and female figurines, which act as substitutes for the witch. The figurines underwent various manipulations, and the ritual was concluded with the burning of the figurine and discarding of all residues of the magic act in a deserted location.[361]

The connection between the darkness created by gluing two bowls together, and the reversal of the act of witchcraft, can be found in the Maqlû II ritual, in the spells that serve as accompaniment for the incineration of the figurines:

> "Whoever you are, witch who took clay for my (figurine) from the river, who buried figurines of me in the "**dark house**. "[362]

In addition to the darkness motif, the other elements of the burial of two bowls glued rim to rim can be explained with the aid of a version that was aimed at the exorcism of a witch and of witchcraft in the Maqlû III ritual. Quotes from this ritual are also found in the bowl written by

[358] Ibid.
[359] Daniel Schwemer, "The Ancient Near East," in D. J. Collins (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Magic and Witchcraft in the West from Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge 2015) 17-51 esp. p. 33.
[360] Further elaboration on the gender-stereotypical aspects, see in the section discussing contagion magic, in this chapter 3 (section 2).
[361] Tzvi Abusch, "The Socio-Religious Framework of the Babylonian Witchcraft Ceremony Maqlû: Some Observations on the Introductory Section of the Text, Part I," in Tzvi Abusch (ed.), *Riches Hidden in Secret Places: Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Memory of Thorkild Jacobsen* (Eisenbraun 2002) 1-34 esp. p. 14.
[362] Text Maqlû II: 183-184 Abusch, *The Witchcraft Series Maqlû*, 67.

Gušnazdukht Daughter of Aḥat, which will be discussed in the fifth chapter. The part of the ritual aimed at the exorcism of witches entailed creating a boat out of clay.[363] The figurines of the witch were placed inside the boat, floating with the stream towards the Netherworld. Real-life boats of antiquity were sealed with bitumen, as was the boat sailing in the magical cosmos. The openings in the boat were sealed with bitumen, and the words of the curse were neutralized, and returned to the witch. The spell accompanying the ritual says:

> "She who has performed sorcery against me, this be her **boat**: Just as **this boat turns over/back, so may her witchcraft turn over/back** and go onto her head and body. It is the wording (of the incantation) to undo witchcraft: **a boat of clay**—two figurines of clay inside it." [364]

The conjoined pair of incantation bowls was buried together. The connection of two bowls, rim to rim, is reminiscent of the shape of the Mesopotamian clay boat, where the openings were sealed with bitumen. The similarity of the space created between the conjoined bowls, and the space inside the boat, is intensified when we consider the rope wrapped twice around the bowls and the six bitumen "domes" where the rope was glued to them. The sealed space captured the words inside it, and so the curse was trapped, and the ability of the words to torture the bowl beneficiaries was gone; the words were returned to their sender. [365]

In the transformation that occurred between the clay tablets in cuneiform script and the clay bowl written in spiraling Aramaic script an ancient tradition of buried magic objects was able to survive and live on.

[363] Nambúrbi ritual to "undo" a bad portent also includes a clay boat, wrapped and sealed with clay intended to bring torturous ghosts and witchcraft into the Netherworld. The boat was filled with figurines, representatives of words and spells.

[364] Text Maqlû III:116-124a Abusch, *The Witchcraft Series Maqlû*, 79.

[365] For a different approach and similarity to double-jar burial see Ortal-Paz Saar, "Mesopotamian Double-Jar Burials and Incantation Bowls*," Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 4:138 (2018) 863-873.

Chapter 5
Who Wrote the Incantation Bowls?

1. Authors of the Incantation bowl – Literature Review

The authors of the incantation bowl remain anonymous – a common phenomenon in the magical cosmos. Heaps and heaps of words and books were written regarding the sources of the text on the incantation bowls, and the language used in them; yet the authors were not discussed, and we know nothing of them.

Very little has been written on the authorship of the bowls, and is usually limited to a short passage or incidental comment. On one issue there seems to be a consensus – the gender of that anonymous author – was male. S. Shaked, J.N. Ford, and S. Bhayro, theorize that the author was a man, and that he was informed in general rabbinical knowledge, which he would have needed in order to incorporate texts from rabbinic literature in the magic texts.[366] S. Bhayro adds that rabbis, priests, or professional scribes, who were involved in the writing of official documents such as binding notes, or divorce documents, were also the authors of the bowl.[367] Ch. Müller-Kessler hypothesizes that the authors of the bowls came from a rabbinic milieu, and learned the art of writing the bowls in rabbinic schools.[368] As for the religious orientation of the male authors of the bowls, H. Juusola makes the connection between religion and script, and infers that the use of square Aramaic script proves that the author was a Jewish man.[369]

In my opinion, there is no justification for the above claims. A review of the Mesopotamian past reveals a region in which women wrote even in religious contexts. They apparently not only wrote, but also specialized in magical writing. To Sasanian women writers, we can add Jewish women of rabbinic descent who, we assume, acquired a general (and perhaps also rabbinic) education and received lessons in reading and writing.

The latest study in which it has been argued that the authors of the incantation were men, was written by Ortal Paz Saar (and is about to be published in 2019). Saar claims that men wrote the incantation bowls. She bases her conclusion on rabbinic literature's description of a state of affairs in which women were only involved in oral, not in written magic. As an example, she

[366] Shaked, Ford and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 10.
[367] Siam Bhayro, "Divorcing a Demon: Incantation Bowls and BT Gittin 85b," in Markham J Geller (ed.) *The Archeology and Material Culture of the Babylonian Talmud* (Leiden Brill 2015) 121-131 esp. p. 130.
[368] Christa Müller-Kessler, "Of Jesus, Darius, Marduk," 220.
[369] Hannu Juusola, "Who Wrote the Syriac Incantation Bowls?" *Studia Orientalia Electronica* 85 (2014) 75-92 esp. p. 75.

brings the formula Ameimar received from the "chief of sorcerous women" (bPes 110a-110b), and Abaye's quotes of Em (אמרה לי אם), which she translates as "My foster-mother told me."[370] However, I am certain regarding Em's recipes, that because they involve complex magical formulae, listing ingredients and actions, they are obviously based on written texts. As we saw in the first chapter, it is safe to assume that Em – judging by the title she is given in the Babylonian Talmud, מרבינתא – was Abaye's teacher, probably for pharmacology and related matters.[371] We can assume that Em, like other physicians of antiquity, concocted her own medicines and wrote her own prescriptions down.

Saar's conclusion that men wrote the incantation bowls is also based on the illustrated figures on the base of the bowl. She refers to the unchained figures, amongst which she found no female figures, and determines that they must have been representations of the author himself. However, the gender identity of the illustrated figures was, as said above, usually vague. Attributes like the hair length or clothing, supply only a few clues. The sexuality of the few naked figures on the bottom of the bowl is equally shrouded in mystery.[372]

One last hypothesis worth mentioning is that of E. M. Yamauchi, according to which most of the incantation bowls were in fact written by the beneficiaries themselves, though possibly some of them consulted magical experts. Yamauchi relies on a Mandaic text on an incantation bowl, in which the beneficiary describes the writing process in first person.[373] Saar agrees that this scenario, that the purchasers were the bowl authors, is possible, and that they might have written bowls for themselves as well as their families. She bases this assertion on bowls where the writing seems unprofessional, or on others written in pseudo-script.[374] As we shall see, female authors also appear by name as part of the incantation formula, in bowls whose script, in some cases, was describes as "elegant semi-formal."[375]

Three other scholars, however, suggest the possibility that women participated in the writing of the incantation bowls.

---

[370] Ortal Paz Saar, "Who Wrote the Babylonian Incantation Bowls?" Forthcoming. I would like to thank Ortal Paz Saar for sending me her forthcoming article.
[371] Ilan, "Salome's Medicinal Recipe and Jewish Women Doctors in Antiquity," forthcoming.
[372] Vilozny, *Figure and Image in Magic*, 190.
[373] Yamauchi, "Aramaic Magic Bowls," 516.
[374] Ortal Paz Saar, "Review of Shaul Shaked, James Nathan Ford and Siam Bhayro, With contributions from Matthew Morgenstern and Naama Vilozny, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*," *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 110 (2015) 324-338 esp. p. 326.
[375] Text Montgomery 17 (CBS 2922) *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 190-191; Text BM 135563 Ford, "The Ancient Mesopotamian Motif of *kidinnu*," 271.

Rebecca Lesses claims that, amongst the bowl authors, there were groups of women, who usually wrote for their families,[376] and who were part of a circle of people, well versed in magic.[377] As proof, she cites incantation bowls written by women in first person.[378] In her opinion, the opportunity women had to gain expertise in the field of magic, *inter alia* as incantation bowl authors cannot be disputed, as it was their chance to gain not only a profession, but also power.[379]

Yaakov Elman claimed that women had been creating the incantation bowls as clay amulets, meeting the criteria set in the Babylonian Talmud for a "specialist amulet" (קמיע מומחה) (*bShab* 61b), regarding which gender is irrelevant.[380] He added that the essence of the bowl, as a household utensil, used as the background for the incantation formula, hints to a woman maker.[381] The fact that women's names appear in first person proves, in Elman's opinion, that it was women who were the authors of the incantation formulae. The textual contents of the bowls revolving around intimate and feminine matters, he adds, serves as further evidence indicating the involvement of women in the bowl production.[382]

Erica Hunter assumes that women and men wrote the incantation bowls. They might have been going from one city to another, or perhaps they were professionals offering their services locally. Hunter also hypothesizes that the art of writing incantation bowls was a profession passed on in the family from one generation to the next.[383]

It is likely that Elman was right about the amulets written by women meeting the criteria of "expert amulets." Erica Hunter's assertion that the profession of writing incantation bowls was passed on in the family also seems logical, considering that it was common in Mesopotamia for professions involving writing and exorcism to be kept in the hands of a handful of families, handed down from one generation to the next.

Two more scholars share the opinion that women's names showing up in the incantation formula in first person, indeed indicates female authors. The first scholar of the incantation

[376] Lesses, "Exe(or)cising Power: Women as Sorceresses," 367.
[377] Ibid.,361.
[378] Ibid.,362.
[379] Ibid.,348.
[380] Elman, "Saffron, Spices, and Sorceresses," 367.
[381] Ibid. 381.
[382] Ibid. 374.
[383] Erica Hunter, "Combat and Conflict in Incantation Bowls: Studies on Two Aramaic Specimens from Nippur," in Markham J. Geller et al. (eds), *Studia Aramaica* (Oxford University Press1995) 61-75 esp. p. 75.

bowls, J. A. Montgomery points out one bowl – amongst those found in Nippur – which was written by a woman, and another co-authored by a husband and wife.[384] J. B. Segal lists two incantation bowls from the British Museum catalogue, each written by a female author, and a third written by a husband and wife.[385] Both believe from the text that the authors were actually women.

The literary review thus yields very few studies on this question, due to the few mentions of the author on the bowls themselves. It should also be noted that the general consensus regarding the male gender of the author also appears indirectly as a premise in articles discussing incantation bowls where the gender issue is only secondary. Whenever these articles mention a magician or a writer, the gendered pronoun used for that professional is "he".

This study, argues that certainly women wrote some of the incantation bowls, and probably most of them, focusing on the women who "signed" their names as part of the incantation formula.

2. Writing in First Person

The spiral that goes along the inner walls of the incantation bowls almost never reveals the name of the authors who wrote the incantation formulae and were responsible for exorcising demons, spirits and other supernatural entities. Nevertheless, there is a literary stylistic choice of the use of the first person, lacking the name of the author, which is meant to highlight the mythical, timeless nature of the text.[386] The emphasis on the personal note added, by writing in first person, was popular amongst the authors of the bowls, and it seems to have been copied and reproduced in various versions.[387] The first person is found in the different genres of the incantation bowls.

Here are a few examples of the magic style using first person:

- I have bound you with an evil charm….[388]
- I conjure against you in the name of the great Prince…[389]
- This press I press down upon them….[390]

[384] Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 190, 212-121.
[385] Segal, *Catalogue of the Aramaic and Mandaic Incantation Bowls in the British Museum* 25.
[386] Shaked, Ford and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells,* 15.
[387] Ibid.
[388] Text Montgomery 4 (CBS 2923): 2, Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 133.
[389] Text Montgomery 5 (CBS 2952): 3, ibid., 138.
[390] Text Montgomery 6 (CBS 2916): 4-5, ibid., 141.

- I bind to thee and seal and counterseal to thee…[391]
- I bind you with bonds of brass and iron and seal you…[392]

The choice of first person can be found in the following cases: (1) historiola descriptions, given by non-human speakers and by speakers who are the bowl beneficiaries; (2) non-human speakers; (3) angels; (4) human speakers.

I discuss each below:

2.1 *Historiolas*

A historiola is a form of short narrative preface to the spell itself, in order to enhance it. This is a literary device most commonly used by the authors of the incantation bowls.[393] A historiola draws its strength from a powerful magical narrative, which is actually equal in status to a religious ritual.[394] The power of the spell is based on the narrative being told, as if it were the author's personal point of view. This miraculous and magical element, originating in the mythical narrative, supplies the basis for a parallel within the incantation formula. The historiola does not attempt to create a perfect analogy between the mythical narrative and the current/actual situation of the client described in the incantation formula, but rather acts as a bridge between the mythological island and the magic Land.[395]

An example for a historiola would be the story of the encounter between Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa (first generation Tanna) and the Demoness Agrat daughter of Maḥalat, whom the former managed to exorcise. The story is known from the Babylonian Talmud (*bPes* 112b). This type of historiola is used as a precedent proving that exorcism is possible, and can be used as a magical instrument. The author activates the exorcism by power of sympathetic magic, where like activates like. Here is a mention of the same event as mentioned on an incantation bowl:

> "**I adjure and beswear you**, you, evil spirit, who met Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa, and Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa said to her, to the evil spirit who met him at that time, the verse that is

[391] Text Montgomery 7 (CBS 16007): 2, ibid., 147.
[392] ibid., 185.
[393] Shaked, Ford and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 14.
[394] Shaked, "Transmission and Transformation of Spells," 200.
[395] For a discussion on Historiola see Daniel James Waller, "Echo and the Historiola: Theorizing the Narrative Incantation," *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 16 (2015) 263-280.

written: "You make darkness and it is night, wherein all the animals of the forest creep." (Psalm 104:20) **And again I adjure and again I beswear you**…"[396]

2.2 *Non-human speakers*

2.2.1 Demons

Demons sometimes refer to themselves in first person when identifying themselves. A popular speaker found in divorce formula in many incantation bowls is the king of demons, Elisur Bagdana. Since he carries the title of a leader, he is legally "entitled" to write the divorce document in first person.[397]

"Accept the ban from the name of Joshua bar Peraḥiah. By your name **I act. Elisur Bagdana**, the king of demons and *dēvs*, the great ruler of liliths. **I adjure and beswear you**…"[398]

2.2.2 Angels

Angels also sometimes identify themselves in first person:

"**I am Segan the swift angel**, who stands in the presence of the Lord of the World, with regard to [the newborn of women] who are snatched away, and who cries out…"[399]

2.3 *Human speakers*

People, who identify themselves by name as the incantation bowl authors, are scarce. The authors of the bowls remain anonymous, and there is no information regarding them. As shown in the literature overview above, there seems to be a general consensus that those authors were men, who were rabbis, priests, or professional scribes, responsible for writing various legally binding documents.[400] Rarely, does the incantation bowl include a formulation where the authors state that they themselves wrote the bowl, and in which they also include their matronymic. This unique form of writing, or genre, is comprised of two kinds of first-person speakers: speakers who are the bowl authors, and those who are its beneficiaries. In the next

[396] Text JBA 4 (MS 1927/47):9-11 Shaked, Ford and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 65-66.
[397] Shaked, "The Poetics of Spells," 186.
[398] Text JBA 27: 1-3 Shaked, Ford and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 160.
[399] Ibid., 16**;** For more about angels in incantation bowls see Mika Ahuvia, *Israel among the Angels: A Study of Angels in Jewish Texts from the Fourth to Eighth Century CE* (Ph.D. Diss. Princeton University 2014) 159-187.
[400] Bhayro, "Divorcing a Demon," 130**;** Paz Saar, "Who Wrote the Babylonian Incantation Bowls?" forthcoming.

section, I will elaborate more on the authors who identify themselves by name, and who have the authority to exorcise the tormenting entities, who pester the bowl beneficiary. For now, let me briefly review two of the genres used with the formulae in first person. In these examples, the first-person speakers are the beneficiaries. Some of the beneficiaries, as mentioned, may have written the bowl themselves, assisted by experts or books of instruction.[401]

2.3.1 A Counter-Charm Formula - קיבלא

The counter-charm formula is one in which the beneficiaries turn a curse put on them back to their human opponent/s who sent it, or in some cases initiate the curse themselves. These are curses returned to a flesh-and-blood person, whose name is included in the curse formula. In addition to the names of the beneficiaries, various angels, demons, spirits, and even magical sounds are recruited for the enhancement of the formula. The incantation formula uses the first-person form as a stylistic choice. The name of the bowl-author remains unknown. Here is one example:

> "This charm is to send a spirit against Mar Zutra son of Ukmay. In the name of Qaṣpiel the angel of death, **I have adjured you**, Infarat, the evil spirit: **Go against Mar Zutra son of Ukmay** and dwell with him, in his body and his frame, of Mar Zutra son of Ukmay…"[402]

One exception is a bowl which seems to be in the Nominal-First-Person-bowl style (on which see below), naming its author:

> אנה בריך יהביה בר ממא {פ}פומה דכל בני אינשה דקימין לקובלי ופום (6) דדגושנסף בר אימה…

> "I, Berik-Yehaba son of Mama, the mouth of all people who stand against me, as well as the mouth of Dad-Gushnasp son of Imma …."[403]

However, the formula lacks a third element evident in this sort of bowl – the description of the activity or incidence in which he/she is involved; and a fourth element – acting by his/her own magical force. Thus, we can assume that the real author of the bowl remained anonymous.

[401] Yamauchi, "Magic Bowls," 516.
[402] Text 040A (BM 91767):1-5, Levene, *Jewish Aramaic Curse Texts from Late-Antique Mesopotamia*, 119.
[403] Text N&SH B6, Levene, ibid., 124.

The curse genre is different from other incantation bowls in terms of contents, which could explain the reason why the curse bowls were buried in pairs, unlike the rest of the bowls, which were buried face down, as we have seen in the section on burial in pairs.

2.3.2 Formula for Success in Business

The "success in business" formula also employs the first person of the bowl beneficiary.[404] Bowl SD 34, for example, features the name of the beneficiary in first person.

> "May there be healing from heaven for Wartan son of Miriai and for the threshold of his house, and for the prosperity of Wartan son of Miriai and…"[405]…" May you seek and bring to my door and my entrance and to my gate, **I, Wartan son of Miriai**, the businessman and the seller and the purchaser upon a good smell and upon good fragrances…"[406]

An unpublished bowl JNF 117 has a parallel formula, in terms of genre and contents. This bowl was made for a woman named Ayna daughter of Qayyamta, seemingly speaking for herself, in the first person. Both of these bowls were written by the same – male or female – author, who remains anonymous.[407]

Thus far, we have covered various aspects of incantation formulae containing self-identification in first the person, which is actually a narrative technique. The names featured in these incantation bowls include those of the beneficiaries, of entities such as demons or angels, and in the case of the curse bowls, also of the person to be cursed. The names of the authors remain unknown, as customary in the magical cosmos.

3. "Nominal First Person" (NFP) as a Distinct Literary Style

The aforementioned bowls used the first-person speaker as a literary technique, while leaving the author anonymous. In the NFP-bowl style, however, using the first person voice is an active identification of the bowl authors, declaring their role as such. This is a very rare phenomenon in the magical cosmos , both with incantation bowls and amulets. I will refer to this style as **NOMINAL FIRST PERSON** (hereinafter abbreviated: **NFP**).

[404] Txt SD34 Dan Levene, and Siam Bhayro, "'Bring to the gates … upon a good smell and upon good fragrances': An Aramaic Incantation Bowl for Success in Business," *Archiv für Orientforschung* 51 (2005/6) 242-246.
[405] Txt SD34:2-3, ibid., 244.
[406] Txt SD34:11, ibid., 245.
[407] Text JNF 117. Unpublished texts by James Nathan Ford

The following **Table #6** reviews the names of the authors who used the NFP style.

NFP No.	Bowl	Formula	No. of Bowls writen	Transliterated Name of Author	Aramaic Name of Author	Gender
1	CBS 2922[408]	Divorce Document	1	Komiš daughter of Mahlafta	כומיש בת מחלפתא	F
2	BM 135563[409]	Mesopotamian	1	Gušnazdukht daughter of Aḥat	גושנזדוכת בת אחת	F
3	Davidovitz 2[410]	Mesopotamian	10	Dukhtīč daughter of Bahāroy	דוכתיש בת בהרוי	F
4	JBA 56 (MS1928/8)[411]	Divorce Document	7	Giyonay daughter of Lalay	גיוניי בת לאליי	F
5	Gorea 2003, B2[412]	Talmudic	1	Gušnazdukh daughter of Muškōy	גושנזדוך בת מושכוי	F
6	CBS 16041[413]	General Charm	2	Yezidad son of Izdanduch Mirdukh daughter of Banai	יזידאד בר איזדנדוך מירדוך בת באנא	MF
7	Segal 036A (91776) [414]	Mesopotamian	1	Kwarkšid Gušnas son of Dustay Zebinta daughter of Zaywi	כורבשיד גושנס בר דוסתאי זבינתא בת זייוי	MF
8	Smelik 1978[415]	Divorce Document	1	Rašuni son of Immay Ispindarmēd daughter of Immay/Imma. (siblings)	רשוני בר אימי איספנדרמיד בת אימי	MF
9	CBS 2945[416]	General Charm	2	Pabak son of Kufithai Abiina son of Geribta	פאבק בר כופיתאי אבונה בר גריבתא	MM
10	CBS 16020[417]	Divorce Document	1	Huniyāq (Huniyāg) son of Aḥāṯ	הוניק בר אחת	M

[408] Text Montgomery 17, (CBS 2922) Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 190.
[409] James Nathan Ford, "The Ancient Mesopotamian Motif of *kidinnu*," 271.
[410] Text Davidovitz 2 is in a private collection and is being prepared for publishing by James Nathan Ford. I would like to thank him for sending me the forthcoming text.
[411] Text JBA 56 Shaked, Ford and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 249.
[412] Text Gorea B2, M. Gorea "Trois nouvelles coupes magiques araméennes," *Semitica* 51 (2003) 73-85. (French)
[413] Text Montgomery 27 (CBS 16041) Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 212. The same couple appear in Text Montgomery 7 (CBS 16007) as Beneficiaries, ibid., 145.
[414] Text 036A (91776) Segal, *Catalogue of the Aramaic and Mandaic Incantation Bowls in the British Museum*, 75.
[415] Klaas Smelik, "An Aramaic Incantation Bowl in the Allard Pierson Museum," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 35 (1978) 174-177.
[416] Text Montgomery 2 (CBS 2945) Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 121.
[417] Christa Müller-Kessler, *Die Zauberschalentexte in der Hilprecht-Sammlung, Jena, und weitere Nippur-Texte anderer Sammlungen* (Wiesbaden 2005) 46-48 (German).

3.1 *The Criteria of the NFP Style*

It is important to note the four essential criteria defining the NFP style:

a. The authors use first person.
b. The authors identify themselves using their full matronymic names.
c. The authors describe the activities or incidents in which they are involved.
d. The authors act in their own names and not by the power of a God or any other supreme entity.

Below is a sample of one sentence written by each of the authors, using NFP style. Each of these sentences includes all four criteria. (The first three criteria are marked in bold letters. The fourth criterion is marked by upper-case letters):

- **I Komiš daughter of Mahlafta have** DIVORCED SEPARATED, DISMISSED thee…[418]
- I AM THE HIGH HEAVENS, WHICH NO ONE CAN REACH…[419] **I, Gušnazdukht daughter of Aḥat, went out to meet** them. **I spoke and said** to them…[420]
- **I, Dukhtīč daughter of Bahāroy, stand at** my doorway… I AM THE EARTH — NO ONE CAN SHAKE ME [421]
- **I, Giyonay daughter of Lalay**, maidservant of heaven, I RELEASE AND DIVORCE…[422]
- **I, Gušnazdukh daughter of Muškōy,** and every name that I have**. May all vows and tormentors… be paralyzed and disappear/hide from me**… [423] I, Gušnazdukh daughter of Muškōy, FROM THIS DAY AND FOREVER.[424]
- **I come, I Yezidad son of Izdanduch**… **I Merduch daughter of Banai** LAY A SPELL UPON YOU.. [425]
- **I am Kwarkšid Gušnas son of Dustay and,** secondly**, Zebinta daughter of Zaywi** CASTING CASTING (a spell of) enchantment…[426]
- SEALED AND COUNTERSEALED AM I**,** Rašuni son Immay; **Sealed am I Ispindarmēd daughter of Immay/Imma** … [427]

[418] Text Montgomery 17 (CBS 2922):2, Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 190.
[419] Text BM 135563:4, Ford, "The Ancient Mesopotamian Motif of *kidinnu*," 271.
[420] Text BM 135563:6, ibid.
[421] Text Davidovitz 2:1-2, James Nathan Ford, forthcoming.
[422] Text JBA 56:5-6, Shaked, Ford and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 249.
[423] Text Gorea B2:16, James Nathan Ford, forthcoming. Grammatically, this sentence is in imperative tense – unlike the other 9 sentences in the NFP-bowls, which use the active voice.
[424] Text Gorea B2:19, ibid.
[425] Text Montgomery 27 (CBS 16041):1**;** 8 Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 212.
[426] Text 036A (91776):1, Segal, *Catalogue of the Aramaic and Mandaic Incantation Bowls in the British Museum*, 75.

- **I come, I Pabak son of Kufithai**, IN MY OWN MIGHT, on my person… **I Abiina son of Geribta** WILL BRING DOWN UPON YOU the curse[428]
- **I Huniyāq son of Aḥāṯ,** HAVE DIVORCED SEPARATED, DISMISSED thee… [429]

Now that the NFP elements are clear, we can proceed to the statistical review of these unique incantation bowls.

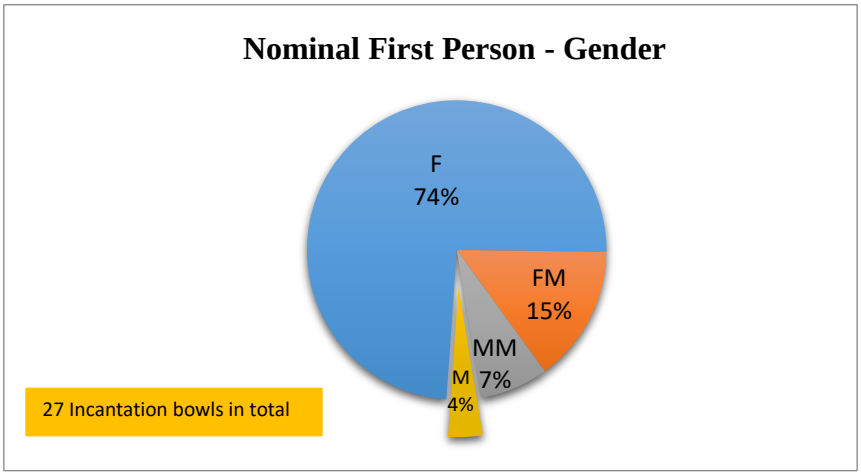
3.2 *NFP Authors – Statistical Data*

The previous table 6 includes fourteen names of male and female authors, who were probably magic specialists, and who wrote 8.7% of 296 incantation bowls in my catalogue.[430] The formula on these bowls features the names of one or two persons in NFP style. Only five authors write themselves, with their name appearing as part of the incantation formula (bowls no. 1-5), and in all these cases, the author is a woman. Cooperation between a male and a female author is also common within this group of bowls (no. 6-8). If we take into account the women who act on their own, together with the women who work in cooperation with a man, the total is eight women writing incantation bowls. Data shows that one bowl, written by a single man (no. 10), was copied in an unprofessional manner (more on this below), otherwise no man appears as a single author of an incantation bowl; only as part of a team, usually a married couple.
The Table above lists 10 bowls, but from the handwriting it is clear that some of the bowl-authors wrote more than one bowl. These add to 27 incantation bowls written by authors whose names appear in the table, and by gender, they yield the following statistics:

- 20 bowls (74%) – were written by women (F).
- 4 bowls (15%) – were written by a team of male and female authors (FM).
- 2 bowls (7%) – were written by a team of 2 men (MM).
- Huniyāq Son of Aḥāṯ – as we shall see, he cannot be considered an expert, according to the bowl quality test, but he is included in these statistics since he wrote in NFP style (M).

[427] Text Smelik 1978:1, James Nathan Ford, forthcoming.
[428] Text Montgomery 2 (CBS 2945):5-6, Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 121.
[429] Text CBS 16020:1, Müller-Kessler, *Die Zauberschalentexte in der Hilprecht-Sammlung*, 46.
[430] This collection of 296 bowls is joined by the bowl Davidowitz 2, which is yet to be published. This addition only applies to the statistics on NFP. Text Davidovitz 2 ,James Nathan Ford, forthcoming.

Here is the **chart #7** of the bowls written in NFP style, divided by gender:



Statistics shows that the total number of women involved in the writing of such bowls, including those working in cooperation with men, accounts for 89% of the bowls. I assume and will argue that the authors expertise extended to the area of rituals performed as part of the magic act of the bowl.[431]

4. The Female Authors of the NFP Style

The expertise of the NFP-style authors is evident in the varied formulae they wrote. Their handwriting is featured on other incantation bowls, where the author's name was left out of the formula. As we see in the table, one female author wrote seven incantation bowls, and another female author wrote ten. Below are the additional bowls written by the NFP authors:

- דוכתיש בת בהרוי Dukhtīč daughter of Bahāroy – wrote an incantation bowl using a Mesopotamian formula. In addition to this NFP-bowl, we find her handwriting on nine other bowls, all of which are historiolas on the Semamit story,[432] on which I shall elaborate later.
- גיוניי בת לאליי Giyonay daughter of Lalay – wrote divorce-genre NFP incantation bowl.[433] She wrote six more bowls in the same genre, some of them for her own family.[434]

[431] Lesses, "Exe(or)cising Power," 362.
[432] James Nathan Ford, "New Light from Babylonia on the Semamit Story," *Eretz-Israel* 32 (2016) 149-161 esp. pp. 149; 157 (Hebrew).
[433] Text JBA 56 (MS 1928/8) Shaked, Ford and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 249.
[434] Text JBA 17 (MS 2053/33) ibid., 117**;** Text JBA 19 (MS 2053/132) ibid., 123; Text JBA 20 (MS 2053/150) ibid., 126**;** Text Wolf 69, unpublished**;** Text A/2 Moussaieff 11, Shaked, "The Poetics of Spells," 188**;** Text CBS 85-48-914 unpublished.

- The couple יזידאד בר איזדנדוך Yezidad son of Izdanduch and his wife מירדוך בת באנא Merduch daughter of Banai – wrote an NFP-bowl for themselves.[435] They also feature as beneficiaries in another bowl in the same handwriting, which is a general charm.[436]
- Authors פאבק בר כופיתאי Pabaq son of Kofitai and אבונא בר גריבתא Abuna son of Geribta – wrote an NFP-bowl for themselves,[437] and feature as beneficiaries of another bowl. [438] These two bowls were written by the same hand, and in both we find a small magic circle with an X drawn on the base of the bowl. Interestingly, the formula used by the two authors in NFP [439] presents surprising similarities to the formula used by the married couple Yezidad son of Izdanduch and Merduch daughter of Banai.[440] Apparently, comparing the level of accuracy in these formulae, the married couple's bowl has the correct version, and could be the original text copied by the male team.[441]

We see that the male authors were not too successful in the field of NFP. Judging by the accuracy and originality in the incantation formula by the married couple, in comparison to the two men authors, we gather that women were the ones writing the incantation formulae themselves (although we can never be certain). The hypothesis, that men whose names appear next to their wives are not the authors, is also supported by the incantation bowl written by Giyonay daughter of Lalay, where she and her husband are the beneficiaries. The name of the husband as beneficiary appears before his wife's in the opening and closing sections, as with the two other couples working as a team, but Giyonay's name alone shows up in the NFP pattern with the title אמתא דישמיא (maidservant of heaven), as the bowl author, presumably an indication of her professional status.[442]

The writing in NFP style by the five female authors can be divided into three genres:

- Divorce Formula – used by Komiš daughter of Mahlafta (NFP-bowl 1) and Giyonay daughter of Lalay (NFP-bowl 4).
- Mesopotamian Formula – used by Gušnazdukht daughter of Aḥat (NFP-bowl 2) and Dukhtīč daughter of Bahāroy (NFP-bowl 3).

[435] Text Montgomery 7 (CBS 16007) *Montgomery, Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 145.
[436] Text Montgomery 27 (CBS 2945) ibid., 212.
[437] Text Montgomery 2 (CBS 2945) ibid., 121.
[438] Text Montgomery 4 (CBS 2923) ibid., 133.
[439] Text Montgomery 2 (CBS 2945) ibid., 121.
[440] Text Montgomery 27 (CBS 16041) Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 212.
[441] Ibid.
[442] Text JBA 56 (MS 1928/8):5 Shaked, Ford and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 249.

- Talmudic Formula – used by Gušnazdukh daughter of Muškōy (NFP-bowl 5).

In the following sections, I will elaborate on each of the five, incantation bowls written by these five female authors in NFP style, including a short note regarding the writing of the male Huniyāq son of Aḥāṯ.

4.1 Komiš Daughter of Mahlafta כומיש בת מחלפתא – NFP-Bowl 1

Aramaic bowl text [443]

Image #4
Incantation bowl Montgomery 17

דין יומא מכל יומא שני ודרי (2) עלמא אנה כומיש בת מחלפתא שביקית (3) ופטירית ותרכיא יתיכי אנתי ליליתא לילית דברא (4) שלניתא וחטפיתא אנת תלתיכין ארבעתיכין חמישתיכין (5) ערטיל שלחתין ולא לבישתין סתיר סעריכין מיעל גביכין (6) שמיע עליכין דאימכין פלחן שמה ואביכין פלחדד ליליתה שמעו ופקו ולא תסיסון (7) לא לכומיש בת מחלפתא בביתה פק אתין כל מן ביתה ומן דירתה ומן כלתא ומארתשיה (8) בנה גדרת עליכין בשמתא דשלח עליכון יהושע בר פרוחיה אומיתי עליכין ביקרא דאביכין (9) וביקרא דאימיכון וסיב לכין גיטיכין ופיטריכין גיטכי ופיטורכי דאת שלחתן בשמתא דשלח (10) עליכין יהושע בן פרחיה דהכדין אמר לכא יהושע בן פרוחיה גיטה אתא לכא מעבר ימא אישתכח כתיב דאימיכון (11) פלחן שמה ואביכון פלחדד ליליתא פמטו ופקו ולא תסיסון לה לכומיש בת מחלפתא לא בביתה ולא בדירתה אסרית (12) וחתמית בעיזקתא דאל שדי ובעיזקתא דיהוש בן פרוחיה אסיא אסותא ופטרתא מן שמיא לאבא וליזדיד ולחוניק בני כומיש (13) בטילן ומבלטן כל מבכלתא דפירקין להון בשמתא להון אמן אמן סלה .

English translation

This day above any day, years and generations of (2) the world, I Komiš daughter of Mahlafta have divorced, (3) separated and dismissed thee, thou Lilith, Lilith of the Desert, (4) the grabber and the snatcher[444]. The three of you, the four of you, the five of you, (5) naked are ye sent forth, nor are ye clad, with your hair dishevelled behind your backs. (6) It is announced to you, whose mother is Palhan and whose father (Pe)lahdad, ye Liliths: Hear and go forth and do not trouble (7) Komiš daughter of Mahlafta in her house. Go ye forth altogether from her house and her dwelling and from Kalletha and Artasria (8) her children. I have warded against you with the

[443] Text Montgomery 17 (CBS 2922) Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 190-191.
[444] The correction of the term שלניתא וחטפיתא in Montgomery's translation is according to the translation of Text JBA 15:3 in Shaked, Ford and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 110.

ban[445] which Joshua bar Perohiah sent against you. I adjure you by the honor of your father (9) and by the honor of your mother, and take your divorces and separations, thy divorce and thy separation, in the ban which is sent (10) against you by Joshua ben Perahiah, for so has spoken to thee Joshua ben Perahiah: A divorce has come to us from across the sea. There is found written: whose mother is (11) Palhan and whose father Pelahdad, ye Liliths: And now flee and go forth and do not trouble Komiš daughter of Mahlafta in her house and her dwelling. I bind (12) and I seal with the seal of El Shaddai and with the seal of Yehosh ben Perohiah the healer, healing and release from Heaven for Aba and Yazdid and Honik sons of Komiš. (13) Thwarted and frustrated are all injurers, whom we have removed by the ban upon them. Amen, Amen, Selah.

4.1.1 Divorce from Across the Sea Formula

Montgomery's incantation NFP-Bowl 1 (Image #4)[446] was discovered *in situ* in Nippur. Komiš daughter of Mahlafta writes this bowl in NFP style, including a formula of a divorce decree that "has come to us from across the sea" (גיטה אתא לכא מעבר ימא).[447]

This divorce formula uses legal terminology and structure of Jewish divorce documents.[448] The act of the divorce is performed by Komiš and also under the name of the well known Rabbi, Joshua ben Peraḥiah, who lived in the Land of Israel during the second century B.C.E., and under his authority.[449] These two elements – affinity and similarity to the original divorce decree, and the use of this reputable rabbi's name, were routinely in use by the Jewish society in Mesopotamia and were perceived by the incantation bowls purchasers as a guarantee for success. A large number of divorce formula incantation bowls reflect this success in exorcising Lilith and healing her disease and misery symptoms. The divorce formula is intended to separate Lilith from the body of the beneficiary, man or woman, whom the demoness had sexually seduced. The added power of the precedent resulted in an efficient amulet for the exorcism of

[445] The correction of the term בשמתא according to Text JBA 15:8. ibid.
[446] Text Montgomery 17 (CBS 2922) Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 190. **Image #4** - courtesy of the Penn Museum.
[447] Text Montgomery 17 (CBS 2922) ibid.
[448] For more about the magic deed of divorce in the incantation bowls, see Shaked, "The Poetics of Spells," 173-195**;** Daniel J. Frim, "'And It Was in the Dwelling of Rabbi Joshua bar Peraḥiah': Notes on the Anti-Demonic *Geṭ* in the Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Incantation Bowls," *Review of Rabbinic Judaism* 18 (2015) 192-226.
[449] Shaked, Ford and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 103; for a different approach to the *get* formula as a part of a mythic *geṭ* and a historotla, see Frim, "And It Was in the Dwelling of Rabbi Joshua bar Peraḥiah," 201-211.

Lilith the Demoness, which qualifies as what the rabbis describe with the words "effective amulet" (אתמחי קמיע) (*bShab* 61a) with proven results.[450]

The use of the magic formula of divorce from across the sea was chosen by the author because this formula does not handle a human being, but a demoness, which is why it would be impossible to coerce her to attend the performance of the ritual of divorce and to accept it.[451] The formula used is based on the power of sympathetic magic. The name of Rabbi Joshua ben Peraḥiah is intended to highlight the legal aspect of the document, and at the same time adds a magic aura to it, which functions in the same manner as the names of God or of angels in other bowls.

4.1.2 Affinity to the Divorce Formula

The following **Table #7** shows the similarities between the incantation formula and the divorce text, in terminology, procedure, and legal formality.

Line	NFP-Bowl 1	Elements
1-2	This day above any day, years and generations of the world	Defined time frame
2	I Komes daughter of Mahlafta	Name of the author
2-3	have divorced separated, dismissed you שביקית ופטירית ותרכיא יתיכי	Official purpose (cf. *mGit* 9:3)
3	• לילית דיברא - Lilith of the Desert • וחטיפתא שלניתא - grabber and the snatcher • תלתיכין ארבעתיכין חמישתיכין – The three of you, the four of you, the five of you	Description/Names of the entity, addition to the accurate name
5	You are stripped naked and are not clothed, your hair is disheveled and cast behind your backs.	Ritual of divorce/exorcism – reference to the ***sotah*** (suspected adulteress)
6	It is announced to you	Official declaration
6	דאימכין פלחן שמה ואביכין פלחדד whose **mother** is Palhan and whose f**ather** Pelahdad	Verification using parents' names – **mother/father**
6-8	1. ye Liliths: Hear and go forth and do not trouble Komiš daughter of Mahlafta in her house. 2. Go ye forth altogether from her house and her dwelling	Details of the divorce/exorcism act

[450] Elman, "Saffron, Spices, and Sorceresses," 373.

[451] There are different interpretations regarding the use of גיטא אתא לנא מיעיבר ימא – "divorce decree that has come to us from across the sea" or "has descended to us from heaven" in incantation bowls. The source of this expression is in *mGit* 1:1. Some maintain that it is used for confirmation and validation of the name of the exorcised, Lilith, whose name was declared in heaven.

	3. from Kalletha and Artasria her children	
8	I have warded against you with the **Ban**	Verdict – ban
8	With the ban which **Joshua bar Perahiah** sent against you.	Action using the authority of a rabbi
8-9	**I adjure** you by the honor of your **father** (9) and by the honor of your **mother**	Adjuration using parents' names – **father/mother**
9	take your divorces and separations	Cooperation of the divorced/exorcised
9-10	in the ban which is sent against you by Joshua b. Perahiah	Ban under a rabbi's authority
10	A divorce has come to thee **from across the sea**	Definition of legal document
10-11	And it was found written in it that your mother is **Palhan** and your **father** Pelahdad	Identification through parents' names – **mother/father**
11	flee and go forth and do not trouble Komiš daughter of Mahlafta in her house and her dwelling.	Verdict – exorcism
11-12	I bind and I seal with the seal of El Shaddai with the seal of Joshua bar Perahiah	Signatures of two witnesses
12	release from Heaven	Acting in God's name
13	Thwarted and frustrated are all Injurers, whom we have removed	Exorcism = healing
13	Amen, Amen, Selah.	Closing section

The divorce formula in the bowl written by Komiš is unique. It contains some elements found in other bowls, but the exact structure, literary organization, clear style, affinity to the formal legal text in procedures and conventions – all these are rarely found in other incantation bowls.
The terminology used by Komiš is customary divorce phrases.[452] As I intend to show below, she uses all four elements required for a valid divorce document: Official opening; date; identification of the exorcised entity and beneficiary name.

4.1.3 Official Opening

The opening uses the same phrasing as official divorce documents:[453]

אנה כומיש בת מחלפתא שביקת ופיטרית ותרכית יתיכי [454]

"I Komiš daughter of Mahlafta have divorced, separated, and dismissed thee…"[455]

[452] Avigail Manekin Bamberger, "Jewish Legal Formulae in the Aramaic Incantation Bowls," *Aramaic Studies* 13 (2015) 69–81, esp. p. 70.
[453] Ibid., 39-41**;** 71.
[454] Montgomery, 17 (CBS 2922) 2-3, Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 190.

The use of the word יתיכי is a rarity typical of the legal tradition, which enhances the legal validity of the document.[456] The conjugation of the word is technically in second person, highlighting the use of the first person form when addressing the entity. The continuation of the document is in third person, also characteristic of a legal divorce document:[457]

שמעו ופקו ולא תסיסון לה[458] לכומיש בת מחלפתא בביתה.[459]

"Hear and go forth and do not trouble Komiš daughter of Mahlafta in her house…"[460]

The use of first person followed by third person denotes the fact the author, writing in first person, is a professional representing herself, as the client.

As for the opening of the divorce document, the use of a formula with close affinity to the one used in this bowl, begining immediately with the divorce document, is rare. Many divorce-formulae bowls use different openings. Here are 2 examples:

- אסותא מן שמיה תיהוי לה לביתיה...

"May there be healing from heaven for the house of…"[461]

- הדין גיטא דליליתא דליטתא דיכתבית לה ל-X כל שום דאית לה תינטרי תיתסי ברחמי שמיא

"This is the deed of divorce of the accursed Lilith, which I have written for X May she be healed and protected by the grace of heaven."[462]

The fidelity of the incantation to the official rabbinic divorce text is most important. It is reflected in the opening of the incantation, and as we shall see below, is also to be detected in other parts of it.

4.1.4 Date

The formula opens with a date, as required in divorce documents [463]

דין יומא מכל יומא שני ודרי עלמא

---

[455] Ibid.
[456] Matthew Morgenstern, "Linguistic Features of the Texts in this Volume," in Shaked, Ford and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 39-49 esp. p. 42.
[457] Manekin Bamberger, "Jewish Legal Formulae in the Aramaic Incantation Bowls," 71.
[458] Montgomery 17 (CBS 2922):6, read here לא, but assumed it refers "to her" (לה), as shown to me by Tal Ilan.
[459] Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 17:6-7.
[460] Ibid.
[461] Text JBA15; JBA29; JBA37; JBA43; JBA55, Shaked, Ford and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 110;164;185;200;245.
[462] Text JBA 50; JBA51; JBA52; JBA54, ibid., 226; 229; 232; 238.
[463] Avigail Manekin Bamberger, *Parallels between the Aramaic Incantation Bowls and the Babylonian Talmud* (Master's Thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2012) 67-70 (Hebrew).

"This day above any day, years and generations of the world"[464]

The date is specified as proof that the divorce is valid as of the day the bowl is written. The times declared in the formula are not accurate. Nevertheless, a certain day, of a certain year, in a certain generation is stated. This vague accuracy meets the criteria for a valid divorce document. The Mishnah stated that a divorce document lacking time specification, even if signed by the witnesses, is invalid (*mGit* 9:4), and the Babylonian Talmud elaborates on the importance of the date, setting the time in which the divorce document becomes effective (*bGit* 17a). Setting of times seems to be more crucial in a divorce document than the witnesses' signatures.[465] In retrospect, a simple time specification such as "today,"[466] or like the time stated by Komiš daughter of Mahlafta, is obviously sufficient.

Since we are dealing with a magical text, we should note that from the Mesopotamian point of view, an accurate specification of the time was paramount.[467] Time was an element set by heavenly as well as earthly omens. In fact, every action during the course of one's life was based on these omens and signs, which were perceived as a form of guidance from the gods.[468] The method used for fortune-telling set a fixed binary division between auspicious and inauspicious omens. Celestial bodies, as well as crossings of planets and astrological signs, influenced the nature of the omens. Since time was an element which required accuracy for every action and activity, the date setting in the spell of the divorce formula on the incantation bowl is a very substantial matter.

4.1.5 Identification of the Exorcised Entity

Lilith is mentioned with three epithets, serving as alternatives to an accurate name, as required in *mGit* 4:2. The fact that the epithets have precedents that existed in Mesopotamian tradition for many generations is a significant element in determining the identity of the demoness.

- "Lilith of the Desert" and/or "Lilith of the open field"[469] – לילית דברא (reference to the habitat of Lamaštu).

[464] Text Montgomery 17 (CBS 2922): 1-2, Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur,* 190.
[465] Manekin Bamberger, *Parallels between the Aramaic Incantation Bowls and the Babylonian Talmud*, 68.
[466] Ibid., 69
[467] Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur,* 55.
[468] Bottéro, *Ancestor of the West* 124-125.
[469] Montgomery, 17 (CBS 2922): 3, Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 190.

- "Grabber and snatcher" – שלניתא וחטיפתא (reference to snatching of babies by Lilû, Ishtar, and Lamaštu).
- "The three of you, the four of you, the five of you"[470] – תלתיכין ארבעתיכין חמישתיכין (reference to Lilith's multiplicity or plurality, as discussed in the section on the Jewish demoness, and the various forms she takes).
- In addition to these three epithets , the names of her parents are also mentioned:

  "דאימיכון פלחן שמה ואביכון פלחדד" [471]

  "whose mother is Palhan and whose father Pelahdad"

The names of the parents emphasize the fact that even when the divorce document does not contain the exact, accurate name of the exorcised entity, this is compensated and the document is validated.[472] In the realm of magic, the more names, the better.

Generally speaking, the origins of the legal divorce formulae featured on the incantation bowls are in Jewish documentary texts, and is adapted to the magic genre.[473] The divorce document is meant to separate the bowl beneficiaries and Lilith the Demoness, in the same manner in which the divorce document separates a married couple. The woman becomes a divorcee in the halakhic act of the divorce, and Lilith becomes exorcised through the incantation formula from across the sea – expelled from the house for ever and ever.[474] The magic act of divorce on the bowl is activated by the power of sympathetic magic, according to the principle that like produces like. The divorce in this bowl also shows up in the text as a healing motif.

4.1.6 Stating the Names of the Parents

Usually, the names of Lilith's parents appear in divorce incantation formulae in the following phrasing:

אבוכין פלחס שמיה ואימכין פלחדד ליליתא.

"your father's name is Palḥas and your mother is the Lilith Palḥadad"[475]

In contrast, Komiš writes in the formula, twice:

דאימכין פלחן שמה ואבוכין פלחדד לילתה

[470] Text Montgomery 17 (CBS 2922):4 ibid,.
[471] Text Montgomery 17 (CBS 2922):11-12, ibid,.
[472] Shaked, Ford and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 15.
[473] Shaked, "Form and Purpose in Aramaic Spells," 99.
[474] Rebecca Lesses, "Exe(o)rcising Power: Women as Sorceresses," 360.
[475] Text JBA15:5-6**;** JBA19:6**;** JBA24:4 **;** Shaked, Ford and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 110**;** 123; 137**;** Text Montgomery 8 (CBS 9013):4, Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur* 154.

" your mother is Palhan and your father Pelahdad"[476]

The names of the mother and the father are switched[477] – the mother is called Palhan (Palhas), instead of the father, and the father is called by the mother's name, Pelhadad, but it seems that this is not a slip of the brush, but a deliberate switch. Not only the names are switched, but the order in which they appear is switched as well. The mother shows up first, and then the father, which is atypical both in the incantation bowls and in the surrounding world.

The parents appear three times in Komiš' formula:

- The first time, in the opening formula, the parents appear for identification purposes, instead of the demoness' accurate name (line 6)
- The second time, Lilith is adjured in the name of her parents' honor (lines 8-9)
- The third time, in the closing section, the parents appear again for identification purposes, substituting the demoness' accurate name, when Lilith is already sentenced to be exorcised (lines 10-11).

In the opening and closing sections of the divorce formula, the parents' names appear in an atypical manner.[478] Only in the text body, the parents appear in the regular order, father/mother – without their names. This section of Komiš' bowl alludes to the honor of the parents – "by the honor of your father and by the honor of your mother"[479] – a reference to honoring one's parents in the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:11) and to the Mishnaic phrase: "Rabbi Eliezer says: we give a person an opening [to a vow] by reference to the honor of their father and mother" (*mNed* 9:1), emphasizing that vows are generally not to be annulled, especially not divorce vows.[480] Komiš' bowl reflect the fear that Lilith might annul the divorce vow. In this instance, the fathers' name precedes the mother's, as required by halakhah.

The hapax legomenon of the switching of the names, putting the mother's name first, in the opening and closing formulae, thus seems to be a personal touch, or personalized seal of Komiš. Precisely because Komiš' formula is so similar to the original divorce document, the changes that were made cannot be ignored. At first sight, these seem to be small, and not very far from

[476] Text Montgomery 17 (CBS 2922):6**;**11, Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 190.
[477] Müller-Kessler, *Die Zauberschalentexte in der Hilprecht-Sammlung*, 47.
[478] This version is a hapax legomenon, and does not appear even in Montgomery's bowl no. 8 (CBS 9013), which is similar in contents. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 154.
[479] Text 17 (CBS 2922): 8-9, ibid., 190.
[480] Baruch A. Levine, "Appendix," in Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia: Late Sasanian Times*, (Leiden Brill 1970) 343-373 esp. p. 348.

the original, but the symbolism of the act of making these slight variations, especially when repeated twice, confirms, in my opinion, the fact that this bowl was written by a woman.

4.1.7 Medical Formula

The incantation formula written by Komiš is not only used for the exorcism of Lilith, but also features a medical treatment motif, performed by Joshua ben Perahiah, who carries the title of physician.[481]

וחתמית בעיזקתא דאל שדי ובעיזקתא דיהוש בן פרוחיה אסיא...

"signed with the seal of El Shadai and with the seal of Yehosh ben Perohiah the healer…".[482]

This motif of healing and curing also appears at the end of the bowl-formula:

בטילן ומבלטן כל מבכלתא דפירקין

"Thwarted and frustrated are all Injurers, whom we have removed"[483]

The healing motif included in the incantation formula suggests a link between the magic act of the bowl and Mesopotamian rituals, which involved the use of various medicinal herbs and concoctions. I assume that Komiš was a sorcerous woman, whose occupation included healing, in addition to composing magical formulae and writing them on incantation bowls.

4.1.8 Affinity of Lilith to the *Sotah*

The last subject I would like to touch on is the symbiosis between the image of Lilith and the image of the *sotah* in Komiš' formula.

Despite her powerful image, Lilith the Demoness actually has very few attributes. The unruly hair is a motif found in rabbinic literature, as well as in illustrations on divorce-genre incantation bowls. Lilith's hair is always long, unruly, and wild. The Babylonian Talmud presents her long hair as a demonic attribute, and in fact as part of the beastly image of the woman: "She grows hair like Lilith, she sits and urinates, like an animal, and serves as a pillow for her husband" (*bEruv* 100b).[484] A married woman must cover her hair. Exposing the hair is considered criminal and punishable in the Mishnah: "The following women are divorced, and do

[481] More about Joshua ben Perahiah as a healer see Ilan, "Jesus and Joshua ben Perahiah," 985-995.
[482] Text Montgomery 17 (CBS 2922):12, Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 190.
[483] Ibid.
[484] Rav Yitzḥak bar Avdimi, a 4th century A.D. Amora, in a discussion of the ten curses with which Eve was punished upon expulsion from the Garden of Eden, turns some of the biological female attributes into curses. This conceptualizes womanly traits as linked to sin and makes demonic characteristics, animal nature and sexual subjection to the man, inherent traits of a woman.

not receive their *ketubbah*: One who violates Mosaic Law or Jewish custom. What constitutes [a violation of] Jewish custom? [If] she goes out [in public] with her hair uncovered; [if] she spins [thread] in the market, and converses with any man" (*mKet* 7:6). Exposing the hair is considered such a threatening action, that the Mishnah stipulates that a man may divorce his wife if she exposes it in public, and is exempt from paying her the sum he stipulated in the *ketubbah* in case of divorce or death. Hair is a symbol of sexuality, and its exposure is interpreted as promiscuity. Hair exposure is a motif which also appears in the *sotah* ritual. A married woman is considered to be a *sotah* if her husband suspects her of having sexual relations with another man (*mSot* 1:5). The *sotah* was forced to drink "bitter water," and have her hair messed and clothes torn by a priest in public.[485] The exposed hair and tearing of the clothes reflected, in rabbinic perception, the image of a promiscuous prostitute. During this ritual, the woman was not only presented as an adulterous, but also as having trespassed other religious prohibitions.[486]

The images on the divorce-genre incantation bowls combine two motifs: unruly hair and nudity, creating a hybrid of two figures – the *sotah*, and Lilith the Demoness.

In some incantation bowls the formula states:

ערטיל שלחתין ולא לבישתין סתיר סעריכין מיעל גביכין

"Naked are ye sent forth, nor are ye clad, with your hair dishevelled behind your backs."[487]

Komiš enhances the text with an illustrated image representing the symbiosis between the image of Lilith and the image of the *sotah*. On the base of the bowl the merged figure is chained, with her hands bound over her chest (the illustration has unfortunately faded out over time).[488]

4.1.9 Elements Reflecting a Formula Written by a Woman

This section, it should be noted, would have been unnecessary had it been a man's name written on the bowl instead of Komiš', but research is still gender-blind and so, in a study like this one, gendered issues should be emphasized.

Here are elements which reflect a formula written by a woman:

[485] For more on Tractate *Sotah* see Ishay Rosen-Zvi, *The Mishnaic Sotah Ritual Temple, Gender and Midrash* (Brill 2012).
[486] Ibid., 182.
[487] Text Montgomery 17 (CBS 2922):5, Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 190.
[488] I would like to thank Naama Vilozny for suggesting to me to this interpretation of the image.

- **Expertise** – Komiš daughter of Mahlafta is one of five female authors writing in this unique style of NFP. As I demonstrated above, statistics show that male authors do not show up alone in the incantation formulae, and it would seem that they never acted by themselves in writing them; only in a team.
- **Pseudonym -** Komiš daughter of Mahlafta states in the opening of the divorce formula, that she herself is the author of the bowl. There is no apparent reason to doubt this statement, not even in the historical context. The question is – could it be a man who wrote the bowl, but chose to present himself as a woman? This is of course possible, but it is hard to believe that a man from the rabbinic milieu, holding the same misogynic and patriarchal views which are evident in the Babylonian Talmud, and who also lived in the Sasanian Empire, which was just as misogynic and patriarchal, would falsely present himself under a woman's pseudonymic.
- **Gender** – The switching of the positions of the mother/father, female/male, placing the female first, is highly unusual in the society at hand. The general perception is summarized in the words of the Mishnah: "The father comes before the mother in all places" (*mKer* 6:9), which is why this reversal is so significant in the case of Komiš, and makes it likely that the bowl was indeed written by a woman.
- **Magic divorce** – The procedure of the magical divorce is essentially different from that of the halakhic divorce. The author is in fact writing the divorce decree against the demoness Lilith. A closer inspection reveals two halakhically forbidden elements. The divorce is written and served by a woman, and that woman is divorcing or exorcising a female entity, or even several entities – as opposed to the halakhic divorce, where the man divorces a woman – one flesh-and-blood woman.

Komiš consistently and eloquently stuck to the official rabbinic divorce text. This accuracy does not mean that Komiš' mark was not left on the text, she did add her own personal touch between the lines, and in using unique elements. This bowl, written by Komiš, which constitutes a challenge to the religious and cultural monopoly of the rabbis, uses the rabbis' own weapons. If it were to be written in our times, it would be defined as a critical, subversive, feminist text.

4.2 *Huniyāq Son of A Aḥāṯ* הוניק בן אחת – *NFP-Bowl 10*

Image #5
CBS 16020

Incantation NFP-Bowl 10[489] was, like the previous one, discovered *in situ*, in Nippur, and was written by a man. Huniyāq Son of Aḥāṯ [490] declares himself as the author of the incantation bowl, which consists of a formula identical to that of Komiš daughter of Mahlafta. The text is almost the same, and yet these two bowls are worlds apart.[491] Montgomery describes Huniyāq's bowl as containing "a corrupted formula" [492] – while Komiš' handwriting I define as elegant semi-formal hand, Huniyāq's I describe as a crude semi-formal hand. (Image #5) Komiš wrote in a professional elegant hand, consistent in terms of shape and color saturation. Huniyāq, on the other hand, is sloppy in his writing, unprofessional, and much of his copying is corrupted, with letters copied in the wrong direction, i.e. horizontally instead of vertically. Huniyāq also seems to have dipped his brush in ink anew with each word, implying that he was copying a text which was unfamiliar to him. Since the formula was not his own phrasing, and he did not know the text, he would have had to look at the original for each word. The multiple dips are evident in the words having the first letter in "bold" script, with the ink running out and fading as the word grew longer.[493] Additionally, Huniyāq used the wrong brush for this job and medium, i.e. writing a text on clay, and the ink was too diluted. The result is an incantation bowl in which the writing is neither homogenic nor harmonic. The unprofessional work performed by Huniyāq is also evident in the arrangement of the text inside the bowl. The base contains a rectangle which was supposed to be a tiny circle with an X in its center,[494] but the positioning is not exact. The circle is surrounded with three parallel lines. It is clear that Huniyāq is not proficient in spiral

[489] Text CBS 16020, Müller-Kessler, *Die Zauberschalentexte in der Hilprecht-Sammlung*, 46. I would like to thank James Nathan Ford for sending me the new translation.
Image #5 - courtesy of the Penn Museum.
[490] Huniyāq is a rare name, see Ilan, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity*, 188.
[491] Christa Müller-Kessler thinks that both incantations were written by the same hand. Müller-Kessler, *Die Zauberschalentexte in der Hilprecht-Sammlung*, 46.
[492] Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 191.
[493] I would like to thank Ilil Hoz and Orly Schwarz for alerting me to this possibility.
[494] An example of a correct and exact circle with an X in its center, see 2 incantation bowls written by Pabak son of Kufithai and Abiina son of Geribta - Text Montgomery 2 (CBS 2945) Montgomery, Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur, 121 and Text Montgomery 4 (CBS 2923) ibid, 133.

writing. Finally, instead of the chained figure illustrated in Komiš' bowl, an X is marked on the base of Huniyāq's bowl.

Statistics support the notion that NFP is a rare style used almost exclusively by female experts in magic. Huniyāq's name cannot be included in this list. He was apparently a beginner, only just learning the secrets of written magic. His bowl looks like an exercise book. And then there is the name: Komiš' had a son whose name happens to have been Huniyāq.[495] The name is rare and appears only as the son of Komiš and as the author of this bowl. Thus, even though Huniyāq of the incantation bowl has the name of another woman (Aḥāṯ) for a mother, perhaps his real mother was Komiš, the magic expert, who was also his teacher. Some similar patterns can be traced in their writings, especially in the letters י, פ, and ט, suggesting also that Komiš was his teacher.

4.3 *Giyonay daughter of Lalay גיוניי בת לאליי – NFP-Bowl 4*

Image #6
JBA 56 (MS 1928/8)

Giyonay daughter of Lalay wrote seven incantation bowls using a regular divorce formula, not from across the sea and not from heaven. Also, in her spiraling formula, Giyonay does not summon Rabbi Joshua bar Perahiah, as Komiš daughter of Mahlafta had done.

One of the bowls written by Giyonay was written in NFP style – Bowl 4 (Image # 6), [496] and it was written for the protection of her and her husband, Hormiz son of Mama against Lilith. The other six incantation bowls of the divorce genre, written by the same hand, were made by Giyonay for her household members,[497] but those formulae do not include the author's name.

The following **Table #8** analyzes the different elements in the incantation formula.

line	English Translation	Aramaic Text	Notes
1	By your name I make this amulet	לישמיך אני עושה דין קמיעא	Opening

[495] Text CBS 2922:12 Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 190.
[496] Text JBA 56 (MS 1928/8) Shaked, Ford and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 249.
Image #6 - Photographed by Professor Matthew Morgenstern.
[497] Text JBA 17 (MS 2053/33) ibid., 117**;** Text JBA 19 (MS 2053/132) ibid., 123**;** Text Al2. Moussaieff 11, Shaked, "The Poetics of Spells," 188**;** Text CBS 85-48-914 unpublished.

2	in order that it may be for **healing**	דיהוי להון לאסו	Incantation formula intended for healing
2-3	for this Hormiz son of Mama (and) for this Giyonay daughter of Lalay, his wife, and **any name that they have**.	להדין הוורמיז בר מאמה להדא גיוניי בת לאליי איתיה וכל שום דאית להון	Exact identification of the beneficiaries by name
4	This is the deed of divorce of Lilith. A day in the days from all days and years (and) generations of the world.	דין הוא גיטא דליליתא יום בימי מיכל יומי ושני דורי עלמה	Divorce elements: Specified date
5	**I, Giyonay daughter of Lalay, maidservant of heaven**,	אנה גיוניי בת לאליי אמתא דישמיא	Identification of the author in NFP + pen name
5-6	I release and divorce you from **my whole body**, (like) the release of ice in Tammuz, (like) the dismissal of an unclean raven (from) the temple.	אנה פטרנא ומתרכנא ייתיכי מן כולה קומתי מיפטר קורחא בתמוז מישבק ערבא טמיא אבידניה	Use of metaphors unique to the exorcism of the demoness, driving it out of the author's body
6-7	You, mishap, who are called ṣbṭyyd, you who are from the family of pyṣwṣ daughter of qyyrʾ, whose brother was killed by the sword of rmysq the king of demons[498]	אנתי קריתה דמיתקרית צבטייד דאנתי מן זרעית פיצוץ בת קיירא דאיתקטיל אחוה בחרבה דרמיסק מלכא דשידי	Use of family names to identify the exorcised entity. An otherwise unknown historiola.
8-9	And I summon against you this day qyrʾyh who is called hbṭ[---] do not appear to this Hormiz son of Mama and to this Giyonay daughter of Lalay, his wife, neither by night nor by day, in any form. By the na[me of ---]	וקרינא עלך יומא דנן ייית קיראיה דמיתקרי הבט[---] לא תיתחזין ליה להדין הוורמיז בר מאמה ולהדא גיוניי בת לאליי אי⟨ ת⟩תיה לא בליליא{יא} וילא בימא בכל דמו בשו[ם --]	The act of banishment

4.3.1 Opening

Giyonay daughter of Lalay wrote a fairly short incantation formula – only nine lines – which may seem pretty ordinary at first glance, but are in fact quite unique. The opening sentence is interesting and exceptional, not featured in any other incantation bowl. Instead of the standard opening לישמך אני עושה קדישא –"by your name I act in holiness, " a popular form of opening.[499] Giyonay opens with לישמיך אני עושה דין קמיעא – "by your name I make this amulet."[500] This opening shifts the weight from speaking in the name of God, to the magic act performed by the female author. This form of declaration acts as a "copyrights" on this particular formula

[498] Morgenstern writes: "it is possible that drmysq is derived from the late Aramaic form of the name of Damascus." Shaked, Ford and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 249. However, another explanation is also possible: In another incantation bowl in the same collection - JBA 26 (MS 1928/43) ibid., 152, we find mention of רם שד מלכא דשדי (Ram Shed king of the demons). Tal Ilan suggests that this may be a corrupt form of the same name.

[499] This popular opening appears in 20% of the divorce bowls in the collection in Shaked, Ford and Bhayro's book – Ibid., 62**;** 65**;** 68**;** 71**;** 74; 79; 137**;** 169**;** 172**;** 236**;** 260.

[500] Text JBA 56 (MS 1928/8):1, ibid., 249.

composed by Giyonay. It should be noted that this opening formula is common to all the bowls which were written by Giyonay.[501]

4.3.2 "Maidservant of Heaven"

The beneficiaries of the bowl are Giyonay daughter of Lalay and her husband Hormiz son of Mama. The husband's name appears first, before Giyonay's both in the beginning and the end of the formula.[502] The center part of the incantation formula contains Giyonay's statement in first person that she is the one writing the divorce decree against Lilith.

אנה גיוניי בת לאליי אמתא דישמיא אנה פטרנא ומתרכנא...

"I, Giyonay daughter of Lalay, maidservant of heaven, I release and divorce you from…"[503]

Perhaps as her pen name, Giyonay proclaims herself as "maidservant of heaven." This definition expresses piety,[504] and supports the notion that the bowl was written by a professional, devoted to both her faith and her profession. The expression "maidservant of heaven" does not appear in other incantation bowls, and has no parallels in rabbinic literature either. There is only one parallel to this expression in the incantation bowls, and it is in the male form. Bowl 11245 features a purchaser, a man by the name of Aḥū-d-immē son of Yehudi, who is referred to as "servant of heaven" (עבדה דשמיה). [505] He does not speak in first person, and it is unclear to what his title refers.

It is important to note that the words of exorcism against Lilith, are only applied to the author herself, even though her husband also features as a beneficiary.

4.3.3 Magical Elements

Giyonay uses unique metaphors to define the exorcism and banishment of Lilith. These metaphors act on the power of sympathetic magic and assist in the exorcism and banishment of

[501] See the FNP table earlier in this chapter.
[502] Text JBA 56 (MS 1928/8): 2-3**;** 8-9, Shaked, Ford and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 249.
[503] Text JBA 56 (MS 1928/8): 5, ibid.
[504] Text JBA 56 Note 5, Ibid.
[505] Text coppe 10 (IM 11245):5, Ali H. Faraj, *Coppe magiche dall'antico Ira*q (Lampi di Stampa, 2010) 103-109 (Italian). I would like to thank James Nathan Ford for sending me the text of this bowl.

the demoness, together with the upside-down flipping of the bowl and its burial. Giyonay includes two metaphors referencing the essence of exorcism:

מיפטר קורחא בתמוז מישבק ערבא טמיא אבידניה

"(like) the ice in Tammuz, (like) the dismissal of an unclean raven (from) the temple." [506]

We can assume that a phrase like "release of ice in Tammuz" can be a metaphor explaining the incomprehensible by the comprehensible. Tammuz is in the middle of summer. Of course ice is no longer preserved in it. Or it can be a reference to a historiola or narrative with which the beneficiaries are familiar. Regarding the unclean raven, it can also be a reference to a lost historiola or narrative. The Babylonian Talmud knows of an object that was placed on the roof of the Jerusalem Temple (כליה עורב – *bMQ* 9a; *bArak* 6a), whose purpose was to remove ravens from it. Obviously ravens were, in the eyes of the Babylonian Talmud, and of the composer of this incantation bowl, unwanted visitors in a temple. These two elements are the magic engine driving the bowl, by reconstruction of the past.[507] Both historiolas activate changes in the reality of the bowl beneficiaries in the present, and remove the threat of any sufferings inflicted by Lilith. At the same time, they guarantee that the demoness would not come back a second time, and act as a form of warranty or insurance policy.

4.3.4 Elements Reflecting a Formula Written by a Woman

Here is a brief summary of the elements that reflect a formula written by a woman in this bowl:

- The name of the author – Giyonay daughter of Lalay is unmistakably a woman's name.
- The author's professional pen name, "maidservant of heaven," is declined in the feminine.
- The author performs by her own magic act, not in the name of God.
- The divorce/exorcism act described in this incantation bowl is performed by a woman, and served to a woman, i.e., involving two female entities, contradicting the halakhah which stated that a divorce decree can only be served by a man, to his wife.

[506] Text JBA 56:6, ibid**;** see note 6 regarding these two metaphors.
[507] Waller, "Echo and the Historiola," 277.

4.4 *Gušnazdukht Daughter of Aḥat גושנזדוכת בת אחת – NFP-Bow 2*

Aramic bowl text [508]

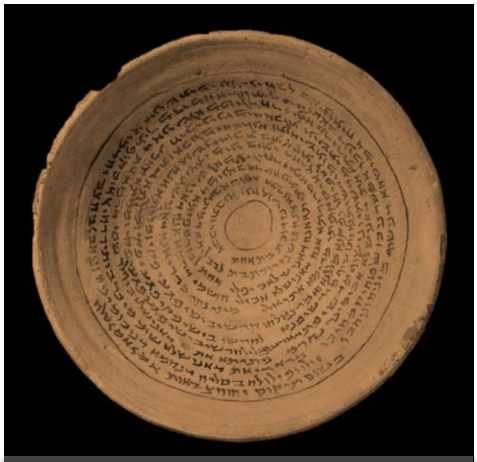


Image #7
BM 135563

אבבי יתבנא אנה גושנזדוכת בת אחת (2) לבבליתא דמינא באסופי לבורספיתא דמינא בארעה יתבנא אנה גושנזדוכת בת (3) אחת פתתיתא אנה דאניש לא כיפלי (4) {הר} שמי דרמא אנה דאניש לא מטילי הרזיפא מרירתא אנה דאניש לא אכילי (5) מיני נהר מררי אנה מרימא אתו אלי (6) חרשי דאניש לא שתי מיני ביתי רחיץ איסקופתי בישי פגעי פקי ומללתא אנה גושנזדוכת בת אחת לאפיהו נפקנא מללנא ואמרנא להו (7) לחרשי בישי פקי פגעי פקי ומללתא דתו אכול מידאילנא ותו אישתו מידשיתנא ותו שוף מידשיפנא (8) מליל חרשי בישי פגע פגעי פקי ומללתא האכנ היכי ניכו מידאכלת ונישתי מדשתי ונישוף מדשיפת דארעה (9) פתיתא את דאניש לא כיף לך שמי דרמא את דאניש לא מטילך הרזיפא מרירתא את דאניש לא אכי מינך נהר {מ} (10) מראר את דאניש לא שתי מינך ביתיך רחיץ איסקופתיך מרימא אילא תור זידו אאבדניכו אמשרניכו על טחי קמחיכו (11) זילו ופילו לה בסליה דנהמא דניכו מיניה וניחבן בחצביה דמיא דנישתי מינהו וניחבן באצותיה דמישחא דנישוף מיניה וניחבן (12) בשום תיקוס יהוה צבאות אמן אמן סלה.

English translation [509]

(1) I sit at my door, I, Gušnazdukht daughter of Aḥat, (2) (and) I resemble a Babylonian. I sit in my vestibule, I, Gušnazdukht daughter of (3) Aḥat, (and) I resemble a Borsippean. I am (text: in) the wide earth, which no one can bend. (4) I am the high heavens, which no one can reach. I am a bitter *harzifa*-herb, of which no one can eat. (5) I am a brackish river, from which no one can drink. My house is secure, my threshold is raised. Came to me (6) evil witchcraft, afflictions, paqqa-spirits, and spells. I, Gušnazdukht daughter of Aḥat, went out to meet them. I spoke and said to them, (7) to the evil witchcraft, paqqa spirits, afflictions, paqqa-spirits, and spells: "Come eat from what I eat, and come drink from what I drink, and come anoint (yourselves) from what I anoint (myself)." (8) The evil witchcraft, affliction, afflictions, paqqa-

[508] Text BM 135563 Ford, "The Ancient Mesopotamian Motif of *kidinnu*," 271.
Image #7 - From the collection of the Museum für Islamische Kunst.

[509] Ibid; Alternative readings of the text see Christa Müller-Kessler, and Tuvia Kwasman, "A Unique Talmudic Aramaic Incantation Bowl," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 120 (2000) 159-165**;** M. Morgenstern, "Notes on a Recently Published Magic Bowl," *Aramaic Studies* 2 (2000) 207-222**;** Segal, *Catalogue of the Aramaic and Mandaic Incantation Bowls*, 92-93.

spirits, and spells spoke thus: "How can we eat from what you eat, and drink from what you drink, and anoint (ourselves) from what you anoint (yourself)? For (9) you are the wide earth, which no one can bend. You are the high heavens, which no one can reach. You are a bitter harzifa-herb, from which no one can eat. You are (10) a brackish river, from which no one can drink. Your house is secure, your threshold is raised!" – "If not, go back to your practitioner, to your dispatcher, to the one who grinds your flour! (11) Go and infest his breadbasket, that he may eat from it and be sickened; his water barrel, that he may drink from it and be sickened; his container of oil, that he may anoint (himself) with it and be sickened!" (12) In the name of Tiqos YHWH Sebaoth. Amen, Amen, Selah.

4.4.1 Mesopotamian Formula

Many Mesopotamian elements are hidden within the twelve lines of the incantation NFP-bowl 2 (Image #7) written by Gušnazdukht daughter of Aḥat.[510] Her Nominal first-person incantation formula style is unique, and has Mesopotamian shades. The text is mostly a lyrical historiola, written in a dialect which is not commonly found in incantation bowls – "standard literary Babylonian Aramaic."[511] The text is enclosed in the area created between two magic circles. Gušnazdukht does not believe in spirals, and her formula is written in concentric circles, around a tiny magic circle on the base of the bowl. This lady is shrouded in mystery, and yet there is some information that we can gather about her. She presents herself as a woman of high social status, a resident of the city Babylonia-Borsippa, who sits at the entrance of her house or at the gates of the city, and encounters supernatural entities on a regular basis. In the case at hand, she encounters three entities she defines as spirits of evil witchcraft, paqqa-spirits, and spells. The formula does not mention any disease, and so we do not know the exact sufferings of the bowl beneficiaries, if those even existed, their names are not mentioned.

Gušnazdukht daughter of Aḥat is proficient in Mesopotamian rituals,[512] and is obviously familiar with two additional Mesopotamian concepts.

---

[510] There are quite a few incantation bowls with parts of Mesopotamian rituals – for example: Ritual Against Lamaštu see Text JBA 47 (MS 2053/258) Shaked, Ford and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 211; and text Montgomery 36 (CBS 2933) see Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 238; Maqlû ritual against witchcraft Text Montgomery 6 (CBS 2916) see Montgomery ibid., 141.

[511] Müller-Kessler and Kwasman, "A Unique Talmudic Aramaic Incantation Bowl," 160.

[512] These are the rituals that were mentioned as influencing the formula of this incantation bowl: ***Maqlû* III** and ***Maqlû* IX** were mentioned by Müller-Kessler and T. Kwasman, "A Unique Talmudic Aramaic Incantation Bowl." 161; 163**;** ***Utukkū lemnūtu* IV and *Nambúrbi* ritual were** mentioned by Geller, "Tablets and Magic Bowls, 57-61**; Nabu's main cult in temple in Borsippa** was mentioned by Segal, *Catalogue of the Aramaic*

The five Mesopotamian elements reflected in the incantation formula written by Gušnazdukht daughter of Aḥat are:

- The power of *Kidinnu*
- The *Maqlû* ritual against witchcraft
- Spirit Exorcism by *Nambúrbi* ritual to "undo" a bad portent
- Acts of contagion magic
- Definition of the Netherworld as part of the magical cosmos

4.4.2 The Power of *Kidinnu*

As she sits at the city gate, Gušnazdukht encounters three ominous entities, linked to witchcraft. A conversation develops among them, reflecting a hierarchy in which she has the upper hand. It seems that Gušnazdukht is immune to acts of witchcraft, demons, and spirits. Her sense of security is based on her being a resident of a temple city. She refers to herself as Babylonian and as Borsippean.[513] The inhabitants of Mesopotamia believed that living in temple cities grants some form of heavenly protection, called *kidinnu*.[514] If ever witchcraft is sent against them, it will be rendered invalid, inactive, and even reversed against the sender. So is also the case with any threats of demons and spirits. Gušnazdukht's trust in the power of *kidinnu* is reflected throughout the entire incantation formula she wrote.[515]

4.4.3 Ritual against Witchcraft – *Maqlû*

Gušnazdukht daughter of Aḥat uses two rituals in her incantation formula: The *Maqlû*, against witchcraft, and the *Nambúrbi*, to avert a bad omen. Such a combination of different rituals was a common phenomenon in the Mesopotamian magical cosmos.

The formula on the bowl written by Gušnazdukht daughter of Aḥat seems to be most influenced by the *Maqlû* III ritual, which was intended to reverse the direction of the acts of witchcraft. These acts are returned to the witch. Gušnazdukht addresses the entities in the following words:

... בארעה פתתיתא אנה דאניש לא כיפלי {הר} שמי דרמא אנה דאניש לא מטילי הרזיפא מרירתא אנה דאניש
לא אכילי מיני נהר מררי אנה דאניש לא שתי.

---

and Mandaic Incantation Bowls in the British Museum, 93**; *Maqlû* VI** was mentioned by Ford "The Ancient Mesopotamian Motif of *kidinnu*," 279.

[513] Ibid., 274-275.

[514] Ibid., 277.

[515] For a different interpretation see Müller-Kessler and Kwasman, "A Unique Talmudic Aramaic Incantation Bowl*,"* 159-165.

"I am the wide earth, which no one can bend. I am the high heavens, which no one can reach. I am a bitter *harzifa*-herb, of which no one can eat. I am a brackish river, from which no one can drink."[516]

The following **Table #9** shows the resemblance of the incantation formula to the *Maqlû* III ritual. I chose to provide two different, yet similar translation variants of this ritual. I think that the parallels speak for themselves:

NFP-Bowl 2 **Translated by** **N. J. Ford** [517]	**Maqlû III** **Translated by** **T. Abusch** [518]	**Maqlû III** **Translated by** **C. Müller-Kessler and** **T. Kwasman** [519]
I am the wide earth, which no one can bend. Line 3	I myself am the Netherworld: you cannot impregnate me. Line 148	I am the earth, you cannot bewitch me. Line 152
I am the high heavens, which no one can reach Line 4	I myself is heaven: you cannot besmirch me. Line 147	I am the heaven, you cannot touch me. Line 151
I am a bitter *harzifa*-herb, of which no one can eat. Line 4	I myself am thorn of the *baluth*-thornbush: you cannot tread on me." Line 149	I am the thorn of a *baltu*-thornbush, you cannot tread. Line 153
I am a brackish river, from which no one can drink. Line 5		

4.4.4 Spirit Exorcism by *Nambúrbi* ritual *to "undo" a bad portent*

Another ritual, with which Gušnazdukht daughter of Aḥat is familiar, is the *Nambúrbi* ritual for exorcism of spirits. The Mesopotamian magical cosmos distinguishes between the creation of spirits and the source of demons. According to the Mesopotamian perception, demons were created by the gods, whereas the spirits are entities who were victims of unnatural death. The spirits return from the Netherworld, invade the bodies of humans, and torment them, in their search for proper burial.[520] The Babylonian Talmud and the incantation bowls regard spirits and demons as one and the same. The entities encountered by Gušnazdukht are spirits. In most cases, the identity of the spirit is unknown, but in this case, Gušnazdukht is familiar with the paqqa-spirits, which are not mentioned anywhere else other than in this bowl. If we assume that

[516] Text BM 135563:3-5, Ford, "The Ancient Mesopotamian Motif of *kidinnu*," 271.
[517] Ibid.
[518] Text Maqlû III: 147-149 Abusch, *The Witchcraft Series Maqlû*, 81.
[519] Text Maqlû III: 151-153 Christa Müller-Kessler, and Tuvia Kwasman, "A Unique Talmudic Aramaic Incantation Bowl," Journal of the American Oriental Society 120 (2000) 159-165 esp. p. 161.
[520] Scurlock, *Magico-Medical Means of Treating Ghost-Induced Illnesses in Ancient Mesopotamia*, 33.

Gušnazdukht is following the Mesopotamian ritual closely, these might have been sorcerous spirits represented by figurines which were incinerated at the end of the ritual in a melting pot called a *ḫulpaqqa*,[521] a kind of crucible where in different materials can be melted in high temperature.

The *Nambúrbi* cured a number of symptoms caused by the "hand of ghost" syndrome.[522] It was a private ritual of Akkadian magical texts intended to "undo" or avert a bad portent caused by ominous occurrences. In *Nambúrbi* texts, incantations were often recited in combination with apotropaic rituals designed to ward off and remove evil. The threatening evil was exorcised by the *āšipu* and replaced by a substitute of a clay figurine.[523] A manipulation of this figurine, using the power of sympathetic magic, aimed at releasing the patient from the bad omen as well as the evil spirit, and transferring it into the figurine. The ritual ended with the sending of the figurine to the Netherworld, supplied with food offerings, and burial.[524] One of the versions of the *Nambúrbi* was performed using a decorated figurine made of reed which represented a bride bestowed on the spirit.[525] In my opinion, Gušnazdukht's incantation formula refers to this version of the ritual, expressed in her encounter with the ominous entities. During the encounter, she approaches the spirits with the following formula:

דתו אכול מידאילנא ותו אישתו מידשיתנא ותו שוף מידשיפנא

"Come eat from what I eat, and come drink from what I drink, and come anoint (yourselves) from what I anoint (myself)." [526]

In the three nights and three days version of the *Nambúrbi* ritual, the decorated figurine played the part of the patient's wife. It would sleep in his bed at night, while his wife had to spend the night elsewhere, and the patient and figurine ate their meals together during the day. During these meals, especially when eating bread, the patient had to recite a text addressing the figurine in imperative speech, speaking in first person. This applied to drinking too. In her formula, Gušnazdukht directly addresses the spirits, ordering them to eat and drink, as the ritual prescribes. [527]

[521] Text 7.6.6: Ritual against the *bēl dabābi*, Abusch and Schwemer, *Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Rituals*, 142.
[522] Richard I. Caplice, *The Akkadian Namburbi Texts: An Introduction* (Undena publications, 1974) 8.
[523] Ibid., 17.
[524] Scurlock, *Magico-Medical Means of Treating Ghost*, 50.
[525] Ibid.
[526] Text BM 135563:7, Ford, "The Ancient Mesopotamian Motif of *kidinnu*," 271.

The following **Table #10** shows a comparison between the orders given in first person in the two texts.

Nambúrbi [529]	**NFP-Bowl 2** [528]
while eating bread he says as follows to her: "**Eat this!"**	**"Come** eat from what I eat**"** **דתו אכול מידאילנא**
While drinking beer he says to her: "**Drink!**"	**"Come** drink from what I drink**"** **ותו אישתו מידשיתנא**
	"Anoint (yourselves) from what I anoint myself" **ותו שוף מידשיפנא**

In this table we note that, in addition to the eating and drinking, the incantation bowl also mentions using oil. The anointment is not mentioned in the *Nambúrbi* ritual, but its presence is felt at the end of the Mesopotamian ritual, as an act of purification and separation from the spirit. The patients are required to anoint themselves to prevent the spirit from returning into their bodies.[530] Another link to anointment is found in the performance of the *āšipu*, who rubs the patient's aching body parts with ointment made out of various ingredients (plants, minerals) mixed with oil and resin, to relieve the pain.[531]

4.4.5 Contagion Magic

A further element expressed in Gušnazdukht's incantation formula, which is drawn from Mesopotamian rituals, is magical acts performed by the power of contagion magic. In this case, control is gained by contact with bread or oil belonging to the person who is the sender of the supernatural entities. This magic act is manifested in using physical, material elements of the person against whom magic is enacted – hair, nails, fringes of their clothes, or dust taken from a place where they once stood; all these are used as elements of control. Gušnazdukht orders the three entities:

זילו ופילו לה בסליה דנהמא דניכו מיניה וניחבן בחצביה דמיא דנישתי מינהו וניחבן באצותיה דמישחא דנישוף מיניה וניחבן

[527] Text THeth 23, p. 84ff lines 14-21 Scurlock, *Magico-Medical Means of Treating Ghost*, 519**;** For a different interpretation see Geller, "Tablets and Magic Bowls," regarding *Udug-hul* Tablet IV p. 57 and regarding the *Nambúrbi* ritual p.60.
[528] Ford, "The Ancient Mesopotamian Motif of *kidinnu*," 271.
[529] Text BM 135563:7, ibid.
[530] Scurlock, *Magico-Medical Means of Treating Ghost*, 45
[531] Ibid., 63

"Go and infest his breadbasket, that he may eat from it and be sickened; his water barrel, that he may drink from it and be sickened; his container of oil, that he may anoint (himself) with it and be sickened!"[532]

This sentence clearly reflects the magical act of which witches are accused. The activity harms or transfers a disease by infection through touching the victim's bread, water, or oil. It is the reversed form of the activity of shared meals, which appears earlier, in the incantation formula under the given order:

דתו אכול מידאילנא ותו אישתו מידשיתנא ותו שוף מידשיפנא

"Come eat from what I eat, and come drink from what I drink, and come anoint (yourselves) from what I anoint (myself) ."[533]

It is important to note that the idea behind this particular kind of witchcraft is that the spell attacking the patient was conceived of as an object which can be returned to the sender. This conception is expressed both in Mesopotamian rituals and in the incantation bowl written by Gušnazdukht.[534]

4.4.6 Reversed World

The following **Table #11** shows how the different elements in the incantation formula written by Gušnazdukht reflect magical activity which is also a mirror image, or a reversed version of the world. These elements are expressed in both the metaphors and the magic activity described in the bowl.

line	Aramaic Text	NFP-Bowl 2 English Translation	Magic Elements
1	אבבי יתבנא אנה גושנזדוכת בת אחת	I sit at my door, I, Gušnazdukht daughter of Aḥat,	
2	לבבליתא דמינא באסופי יתבנא אנה גושנזדוכת בת	(and) I resemble a Babylonian. I sit in my vestibule, I, Gušnazdukht daughter of	*kidinnu* Protective power
3	אחת לבורספיתא דמינא בארעה פתתיתא אנה דאניש לא כיפלי	Aḥat (and) I resemble a Borsippean I am the wide earth, which no one can bend.	*Maqlû* III ritual
4	{הר} שמי דרמא אנה דאניש לא מטילי הרזיפא מרירתא אנה דאניש לא אכילי	I am the high heavens, which no one can reach. I am a bitter *harzifa*-herb, of which no one can eat	*Maqlû* III ritual

[532] Text BM 135563: 11, Ford, "The Ancient Mesopotamian Motif of *kidinnu*," 271.
[533] Text BM 135563: 7, ibid.
[534] Abusch and Schwemer, *Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Rituals*, 3.

5	מיני נהר מררי אנה דאניש לא שתי מיני ביתי רחיץ איסקופתי מרימא אתו אלי	From it. I am a brackish river, from which no one can drink. My house is secure, my threshold is raised. Came to me	*Maqlû* III ritual
6	חרשי בישי פגעי פקי ומללתא אנה גושנזדוכת בת אחת לאפיהו נפקנא מללנא ואמרנא להו	evil witchcraft, afflictions, paqqa-spirits, and spells. I, Gušnazdukht daughter of Aḥat, went out to meet them. I spoke and said to them,	Chain of supernatural entities
7	לחרשי בישי פקי פגעי פקי ומללתא דתו אכול מידאילנא ותו אישתו מידשיתנא ותו שוף מידשיפנא	to the evil witchcraft, to the paqqa afflictions, paqqa-spirits, and spells: "Come eat from what I eat, and come drink from what I drink, and come anoint (yourselves) from what I anoint (myself)."	*Nambúrbi* ritual
8	מליל חרשי בישי פגע פגעי פקי ומללתא האכנ היכי ניכו מידאכלת ונישתי מדשתי ונישוף מדשיפת דארעה	The evil witchcraft, affliction, afflictions, paqqa-spirits, and spells spoke thus: "How can we eat from what you eat, and drink from what you drink, and anoint (ourselves) from what you anoint (yourself)? For	Contagion magic
9	פתיתא את דאניש לא כיף לך שמי דרמא את דאניש לא מטילך הרזיפא מרירתא את דאניש לא אכי מינך נהר {מ}	you are the wide earth, which no one can bend. You are the high heavens, which no one can reach. You are a bitter harzifa-herb, from which no one can eat. You are	*Maqlû* III ritual
10	מראר את דאניש לא שתי מינך ביתיך רחיץ איסקופתיך מרימא אילא תור זידו אאבדניכו אמשרניכו על טחי קמחיכו	a brackish river, from which no one can drink. Your house is secure, your threshold is raised!" – "If not, go back to your practitioner, to your dispatcher, to the one who grinds your flour!	Reversal of the magical invitation of the spirits in line 7.
11	זילו ופילו לה בסליה דנהמא דניכו מיניה וניחבן בחצביה דמיא דנישתי מינהו וניחבן באצותיה דמישחא דנישוף מיניה וניחבן	Go and infest his breadbasket, that he may eat from it and be sickened; his water barrel, that he may drink from it and be sickened; his container of oil, that he may anoint (himself) with it and be sickened!"	Contagion magic
12	בשום תיקוס יהוה צבאות אמן אמן סלה	In the name of Tiqos YHWH Sabaoth. Amen, Amen, Selah.	Tiqos is the king of demons and Liliths.

Gušnazdukht daughter of Aḥat defines her magical power using metaphors reflecting a lifeless world. The heavens offer no assistance, the land is barren, the plant is inedible because it is so bitter, and the water in the river is not drinkable because it is so salty. These images resemble the land of the dead in the Netherworld, as depicted in Mesopotamian epics such as *Inannas Descent to the Netherworld* – "The inhabitants of the Netherworld, the 'deaths', exist there in a habit or feathers, murmuring like doves or wailing, drinking brackish water and eating (bitter food) dust and clay. "[535]

[535] Wolfgang Rollig, "Myths about the Netherworld in the Ancient Near East and their Counterparts in the Greek Religion," in S. Ribichini, M. Rocchi, and P. Xella, (eds.), *La questione delle influence vicino-orientali sulla religione greca*. (Rom 2001) 307-314 esp. p. 311.

The spirits also do not conduct themselves the way spirits usually do. The intrusion by the spirit is usually involuntary, and against one's will, but here, we see that the spirits are stopped at the gate of the city, and Gušnazdukht is in control of their arrival as well as their departure, similar to the position of Bidu, the cheif gatekeeper of the Netherworld.[536]

4.4.7 The Netherworld as Part of the Magical Cosmos

Line 148 of the *Maqlû* III ritual in Tzvi Abusch's translation could hold the key to deciphering the reversal of worlds in this bowl for it states: "I myself am the Netherworld…"[537] The perspective Gušnazdukht takes in this incantation formula is a view from within the land of the dead. In this description, she seems to be alluding to the Netherworld and to the movement of spirits between the land of the living and the land of the dead, linked to the upside-down burial of the incantation bowl, and to forcing the spirits back to their dwelling place, through the cracks connecting the worlds, and into the Netherworld. All the elements we have listed so far reflect the Netherworld. This mirror image presented by Gušnazdukht daughter of Aḥat is amplified by the added name of the supernatural entity, in the end of the incantation formula, stating that the magical act is performed בשום תיקוס "in the name of Tiqos."[538] This entity, Tiqos, appears also with the title "king of demons,"[539] or more preceisely, a powerful valiant hero, "…. sealed with the signet-ring of Tiqos the mighty one."[540] This Tiqos is the ruler of the demons and Liliths dwelling in the Netherworld: "I adjure you that you be smitten in the membrane of your heart and with the spear of Tiqos the mighty one, who is ruler over demons and over Liliths."[541]

4.4.8 Elements Reflecting a Formula Written by a Woman

According to the incantation formula, this female author writes a historiola of her own struggle against three evil spirits sent from the Netherworld. The spirits were not sent by a witch, as we would have expected, but by the *āšipu*. The formula does not mention any names of beneficiaries or diseases, and the bowl tells nothing but that Gušnazdukht, who also declares in NFP style is the author of the bowl.

---

[536] Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*, 273, 350, 353-54, 356-59.
[537] Text *Maqlû* III:148 Abusch, *The Witchcraft Series Maqlû*, 81.
[538] Text BM 135563:12, Ford, "The Ancient Mesopotamian Motif of *kidinnu*," 271.
[539] Text BM 91710 see Uri Gabbay, "The King of the Demons: Pazuzu, Bagdana and Ašmedai," in Wayne Horowitz, Uri Gabbay and Filip Vukosavovic (eds.), *A Woman of Valor: Jerusalem Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Joan Goodnick Westenholz* (Biblioteca del Proximo Oriente Antiguo 8, 2010) 57-67.
[540] Text 013A (BM 91710): 8 ibid.
[541] Text 013A (BM 91710): 5-6, Segal, *Catalogue of the Aramaic and Mandaic Incantation Bowls*, 55.

The image of the author, as it is reflected in the incantation formula, fits the liminal position of the location she chose for sitting – at the gate, on the threshold; she exchanges words with entities traveling between the land of the living, and that of the dead; she is able to influence the spirits, and return them to the Netherworld; she ends her incantation formula with the perfect hybrid of the Mesopotamian and the Jewish worlds: "In the name of Tiqos [king of demons and Liliths] YHWH Sebaoth. Amen, Amen, Selah."[542]

In conclusion, let me list the elements which indicate that a female author wrote this incantation bowl as well:

- **Expertise** – Gušnazdukht daughter of Aḥat is one of the five female authors writing in NFP style.
- **Pseudonym** – Gušnazdukht daughter of Aḥat declares herself in the opening as the bowl author. There is no apparent reason to doubt her claim and attribute this bowl to a male author. As noted, it is unlikely that a man from the rabbinic milieu would choose the name of a woman as his pen name.
- **Beneficiaries** – The only name featured in this Mesopotamian incantation formula is that of the author. The names of the beneficiaries are not mentioned. Perhaps the author wrote this bowl for herself. In any case, this formula is unique, so it could not have been taken from a common template.
- **Gender** – The contents of the bowl implies that it was written by a woman who created a formula out of texts that are foreign to Jewish religion and culture alike. The ideas expressed in Gušnazdukht's incantation bowl do not belong in Jewish/rabbinic discourse, and are unlikely to have been written by a man from this milieu. This assumption is supported by the syncretistic ending of the formula, bestowing Tiqos, the king of demons and Liliths, the title "YHWH Sebaoth" – יהוה צבאות – a title which is of course exclusively reserved in Jewish tradition to the almighty God of Israel.

Gušnazdukht daughter of Aḥat appears to be an author specializing in Mesopotamian exorcism. Her text, like that written by Komiš, is consistent and eloquent, with interlaced unique elements, a form of personalized stamp.

[542] Text BM 135563:12, Ford, "The Ancient Mesopotamian Motif of *kidinnu*," 271.

Gušnazdukht includes five elements from Mesopotamian culture in her formula. She is proficient in the methods of defense against spirits and demons, as well as in magic performance. Her incantation formula essentially undermines the performance of the *āšipu*, also pointing to her professional occupation. Montgomery's theory that the settlers of Nippur were drawn to its ruins, in search of religious community life and the associated benefits is invaluable in the case of this bowl's author, as it supplies the background for the Semitic and Mandaic settlements which emerged on top of the ruins of the temples in the third century, at the time when the writing of incantation bowls was first introduced as a practice.[543] The name of the author's mother, Aḥat, is a Semitic name. Based on her thorough knowledge of Mesopotamian rituals, we can hypothesize that Gušnazdukht studied with Mesopotamian authors or exorcists, or cooperated with such professionals, who continued to live and work in her region as, even after the temples that employed them had been ruined. The liminal entity presented in this bowl might served as a representation of the author's own life.

4.5 *Dukhtīč daughter of Bahāroy דוכתיש בת בהרוי – NFP-Bowl 3*

Dukhtīč daughter of Bahāroy wrote incantation NFP-bowl 3,[544] which belongs to the Mesopotamian genre. Her formula is visibly similar to the one written by Gušnazdukht daughter of Aḥat. In the opening, she writes in first person, declaring herself the author of the incantation formula:

"אנא דוכתיש בת בהרוי בבאבי קימנא לבאביל דמינא בסופי קינא {ד} לבורסיף דמינא ארעא אנא אניש לא מנידלי
שמי דרומא אנא אניש לא מטילי שיכרא נהירא "

"I, Dukhtīč daughter of Bahāroy, stand at my doorway (and) I resemble Babylon, I stand in my vestibule (and) I resemble Borsippa. I am the earth — no one can shake me; I am the high heavens — no one can reach me; I am a bright lamp — no one can fix his eyes upon me nor stand before my brilliance."[545]

For a discussion of this formula see the previous incantation bowl.
Incantation bowl Davidovitz 2 – neither text nor photograph is available at the moment. They will be published by James Nathan Ford.

[543] Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 103.
[544] Text Davidovitz 2, James Nathan Ford, forthcoming. I would like to thank James Nathan Ford for permitting me to use this text.
[545] Text Davidovitz 2:1-3, Ibid.

In addition to the bowl written in NFP style, Dukhtīč' handwriting is evident on nine other bowls, written anonymously for different beneficiaries.[546] All Dukhtīč's formulae include a unique recurring incantation formula, relating the historiola of Semamit, a mother of twelve sons who were killed by Sideros, a violent demon. In her flight from the demon, Semamit runs to an isolated mountain, on which she builds a fortified house. Four visitors, Swny, Swswny, Snygly and Erthyqu, come knocking on her door, and when Semamit opens it, Sideros manages to sneak in and kill her son. The visitors chase him, trap him, and make him swear that wherever he hears their names, he will not kill babies.[547]

Image #8
JNL Heb. 4, 6079 (Naveh and Shaked(12a)

Image #8 is a photograph of one of Dukhtīč's Semamit incantation bowls, showing her handwriting. [548]
In all other similar narratives the baby-injuring entity is a female demon. The narrative of a nameless demoness, who visits women in childbirth and strangles the child, and who appears with disheveled hair and a myriad names and shapes (like Lilith), is found in the apocryphal composition *The Testament of Solomon*. Here, too, protection against her is achieved through the use of an amulet whose power is gained by the name of angels.[549] A narrative that features a meeting between Elijah and Lilith in another incantation bowl assigns to this demoness the intention to injure newborns.[550] She, like Sidros, is repelled by similar names of the angels Senoy, Sansenoy and Semangelof. Similar themes are present in the medieval midrash *Alphabeta de-Ben Sira,* in which Lilith is also the Protagonist, and the same names of the three angels written on an amulet, provide protection for mothers and babies.[551] Finally, it is

[546] Text JNL Heb 4, 6079, Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls,* (The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2nd edition, 1987) 117**;** Text Berlin XI-t 5178 C. Müller-Kessler,"Eine aramäische Zauberschale im Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte zu Berlin, *Orientalia* 63 (1994), 5-9**;** Text 4- HS 3003, Privatbesitz Berlin, Müller-Kessler, *Schalentexte in der Hilprecht-Sammlung***;** Text 4a - IM 114987 ibid.**;** unpublished texts by James Nathan Ford**:** - JNF 18**;** JNF 125**;** JNF 149**;** JNF 152**;** JNF 153**;** JNF 188.

[547] This narrative is known in many cultures in antiquity. All the versions, even those in which the names of the characters are different, include the elements of killing babies with the mother running away to protect them. For more see Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*111-122.

[548] Image #8 From the collection of The National Library of Israel, Jerusalem.

[549] For more on this see Moses Gaster, "Two Thousand Years of a Charm against the Child-Stealing," *Folklore*, 11 (1900) 129-162 esp. pp. 157-160. For further detail see Eli Yassif, *The Tales of Ben Sira in the Middle-Ages: A Critical Text and Literary Studies* (Jerusalem Magnes Press1984) (Hebrew).

[550] Text Montgomery 42, Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 258-260.

[551] *Alphabeta de-Ben Sira* 78

interesting to point out the phenomenon of symbiosis between Semamit (the mother) and Lilith (the demoness who attacks her) in an unpublished incantation bowl (Wolf 23), in which the heroine's name is סמימות ליליתא "Semimut-Lilitha."[552]

Viewing Dukhtīč daughter of Bahāroy Semamit-bowls through a gendered prism, Dukhtīč had cast a male demon in the role of the villain. It seems that this is not coincidental. She does this in all the nine Semamit-bowls she wrote. I believe that this is a deliberate choice she made as a subversive act, in that she, as the author, defeats a male entity.

4.6 *Gušnazdukh daughter of Muškōy גושנזדוך בת מושכוי – NFP-Bowl 5*

Image #9
Gorea 2003, B2

Gušnazdukh daughter of Muškōy wrote her incantation bowl in NFP style in a Talmudic genre (i.e. containing many references to texts with which we are familiar from the Babylonian Talmud). The bowl is an amulet intended to heal the author, who is also the beneficiary. The magic engine of the bowl is the power of the revealed and hidden names of God, as well as those of angels, and magical sounds.

The base of the NFP-bowl 5 (Image # 9)[553] features an illustrated figure trapped inside a magic circle. The illustrated figure's hands and legs are chained, and it is dressed in a long tunic, with a three-letter word written across the chest. The word might be כיס (from the grammatical stem כ.ס.ס, in Pa'ul), in the sense of reprimand and reproof.[554] Judging by the three hairs sticking out of the figure's head, it seems that it is male.[555] The horns on the sides of the head imply that it is a hybrid creature,[556] and so does one wing which is hidden behind its left arm. From the incantation formula itself, we can infer that this illustrated figure is a representation of one of the exorcised talmudic entities mentioned in it –

[552] For more see Ford, "New Light from Babylonia on the Semamit Story," 157. I would like to thank Rivka Elitzur-Leiman for for bringing this bowl to my attention.
[553] Text 2003, B2, Gorea "Trois nouvelles coupes magiques araméennes." This text is being prepared for republication by James Nathan Ford. I would like to thank him for sending me his forthcoming text and its translation. Some corrections to this text were made by Tal Ilan. **Image #9** - From the collection of *The Musée Champollion - les écritures du monde*.
[554] I would like to thank James Nathan Ford for alerting me to this possibility.
[555] Vilozny, *Figure and image in magic and popular art*, 178.
[556] Ibid., 179.

Satan, the Angel of Death, Ridia, the Evil Inclination; or perhaps all of the supernatural entities exorcised by this incantation formula – "tormentors and noxious spirits and afflictions and vows and sorceries and (magical) practices and troops (of demons) and infirmity [...] and *dēvs* and satans and liliths and spirits and evil jackal-spirits and no-good-ones."[557]

The following **Table #12** is a thematic presentation of the incantation formula.

Line	English translation	Aramaic Text	Notes
1-3	May there be healing from Heaven for Gušnazdukh daughter of Muškōy, and may she be healed by the mercy of Heaven. This amulet is to be for her for healing, complete and immediate healing, and may Gušnazdukh daughter of Muškōy be healed by the mercy of Heaven	אסותא מן שמיא תיהוי לה לגושנזדוך בת מושכוי ותיתסי ברחמי שמיא דין קמיעא דיהוי לה לאסו אסו שלמא וקריבא ותיתסי ברחמי שמיא גושנזדוך בת מושכוי	Opening of an amulet for the healing of the bowl author
3-5	from the evil demon and *dēv* and *Ridia*, from a spirit, an evil spirit, male or female, and from all tormentors and noxious spirits that trouble her, and from every affliction and Satan.	מן שידא בישא ודיוא וריריא מן רוח רוחא בישתא דיכרא וניקבתא ומן כל זיקין ומזיקין בישין דימעיקין לה ומן כל פגע וסטן	Names of the tormenting entities
5-6	In the name of the great name that no person can utter.	בשום שמא רבה דאינש לא יכיל לפרשותיה	By the power of God's name
6-8	Who can mount the foundations of the world and its ramparts? Who split apart the earth and the sky? Who makes the sun rise? Who makes the stars shine with brilliance? Who rent the seas in their depths? Who revealed the profound mysteries? Who says the great name?	מאן יאכיל למירכב על יסודי עלמא וחליה מאן פלע ארעה וישמיא מאן אעיל במעלני שימשא מאן מבהיק בזיהורי{ כו }כוכביה מאן{ פ }בזע ימי לעומקיהון מאן גלי רזי עמיקי מאן פריש שמא רבה	Words of admiration for God, who created the miracles of nature
8-11	He uttered the great ineffable name, the excellent and good name, the pure and trustworthy name, the holy and trustworthy name, the pure name in which there is no pollution, there is no pronunciation A holy name, a pure name, a mysterious name, an immaculate name, a pronounced-name, an immaculate name, a name weighed in scales of splendor, a great name without equal, ywy is his name.	מפרשא שמא טאבה והטובה שמא דכיה ומהימנא שמא קדישא ומהימנא שמא דכיה דלית ביה סיוב שמא קדישא דלית ביה ניקוב ניקוף שם קדוש **ש** סקסין סקסאין סיקיון וסיקיון והו **פתה ופתיה ם** טהור שם סתום שם נקוד שם נקוב שם נקודא שם שקול בימאוזני הדר שם גדול ואין כמותו יוי שמו	Words of admiration to God's name
11-12	A name of names, a name of names, and from a name, and from the name of his name from among his letters, and letters from a vision, and a vision from the deep and the deep from the hidden, and the hidden from the pronounced, and the prononced from the revealed.	וש{מו}ם שימות שם שימות ומישום ומישום {ום }שמו מיתוך אותותו ואותות מיתוך מראה ומראה מיתוך> עמוק ועמוק מיתוך הסתר וסתר{ וסתר }מיתוך הנקב ונקב מיתוך גילוי<	Hebrew magic sentence phrased like a legal text

[557] Text Gorea 2003, B2:3-5;16-17, Ford, forthcoming.

12	May his name be blessed and doubly blessed forever and forever and ever.	ברוך וימבורך שמו לעולם וילעולמי עולמים {ם}	Blessing of God in Hebrew
13	What is his name? *sqswn sqsʾwn syqywn* and *syqywn*, and he is *pth* and *ptyh*, *qṣ* (=end) is his name, he is called *ḥyqryn*, fever and chills and burning.	ומה שמו סקסין סקסאין סיקיון וסיקיון והו פתה ופתיה קץ שמו חיקרין קראן ליה אישתא (בועירתא) ויקידתא	The names of God expressed as magic sounds
14-15	This is the name and the great mystery that the Angel of Death flees and disappears/hides---- from it. These are the names of the angels that (text: of) the angel of death flees and disappears/hides ---- from them (text: it): Akatriel Yah *dḥq* Paḥdiel Yah. These are the names that (text: of) the Angel of Death flees and is paralyzed and disappears/hides---- from them (text: it)	הדין הוא שמא ורזא רבה דמלאך מותא עריק ומיתבלע מן קדמוהי ואילו שמותם שלמלאכים {שלמלאכים} שלמלאך המות עריק ומיתבלע מן קדמוהי אכתריאל יה דחק פחדיאל יה ואילו שמותן שלמלאך המות עריק ומיתקפי ומיתבלע מן קדמוהי...	Names of angels driving away the angel of death
15-16	I, Gušnazdukh daughter of Muškōy, and every name that I have.	אנא גושנזדוך בת מושכוי וכל שום דאית לי	The author's statement in NFP style
16-17	May all vows and tormentors and noxious spirits and afflictions and vows and sorceries and (magical) practices and troops (of demons) and infirmity [...] and *dēvs* and satans and liliths and spirits and evil jackal-spirits and no-good-ones be paralyzed and disappear/hide---- from me, .. so that it may die for me,	יתקפי ויתבלע מן קדמי כל נידרין זיקין ומזיקין ופגעי ונידרי וחרשי ומעבדי וגיסי ונוסי[א]... ודיוי וסטני ולילית ורוחי וירורי בישי ולטאבי היכין דנימות{ם} לי	Exorcism of a chain of entities, which the author also removes by the power of her own name
17	I, Gušnazdukh daughter of Muškōy. In his name (from ... and from the seraphim and from his name. In his name *hwʾ rbh zhw zzz*)	אנא גושנזדוך בת מושכוי בישמו (מיאנטיב ומיהשרפים ומי...ין שמו בישמו הוא רבה זהו זזז)	The author acts by the power of the secret name of God
18	(*sbht* are signed *yehudit yehudit*, this is {that} the ineffable name that was said <to> Job and to all the righteous of the world) (?) in order to turn away the Evil Inclination, that it turn away, that it turn away from me,	(סבהת חתומים יהודית יהודית זה הוא ששם מפורש שנאמר איב ולכל צידקי) העולם להפנות יצר הרע דיתפני דיתפני מיני {וא}	Exorcism of the evil inclination
18-19	I, Gušnazdukh daughter of Muškōy, (namely,) the demon and *dēv* and *Ridya* and and Lilith and Mevakkalta, from me, I, Gušnazdukh daughter of Muškōy, from this day and forever.	אנא גושנזדוך בת מושכוי שידא ודיוא וריריאו ולילית ומבכלתא מיני אנא גושנזדוך בת מושכוי מן יוומא דנן וילעלם	The author lists the exorcised entities
20	Amen, Amen, Selah. Sound and established.	אמן אמן סלה שריר וקים	Closing

4.6.1 Opening

Gušnazdukh daughter of Muškōy's incantation opening-formula begins with a standard plea to the grace of heaven. She defines her bowl as an amulet for complete and immediate healing.

Gušnazdukh's name appears twice in the opening-formula, and in both she is the bowl beneficiary. [558]

4.6.2 Entities also Mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud

Gušnazdukh mentions entities that also appear in the Babylonian Talmud – some negative and some positive. She lists several tormenting entities such as demons, *dēv*, spirits, and affliction liliths,[559] from which one needs protection.

In addition to these "common" entities, which appear in many other incantation bowls, Gušnazdukh also lists a few unique ones:

- **Satan (סטן)**[560] – Appears in this incantation formula once in the singular, and once in the plural form (סטני), and is exorcised in each case by the different names of God.[561] Gušnazdukh does not refer to him any differently than she does the other tormenting forces, or as distinguished from any of the other angels she lists, and that is also the way in which satan is featured in other incantation bowls – as one more link in a chain of tormenting forces – לכל סטנין ולילין – "all the satans and Lilis."[562]
- **Angel of Death** [563] – Only rarely does this (negative) angel feature in incantation bowls. He appears three times in this particular incantation formula, surrounded by the names of the angels Akatriel Yah *dhk* and Pahdiel Yah,[564] whose names are capable of exorcising him. In a bowl from Montgomery's collection, he is exorcised by the power of the names of God, and by of magical sounds.[565] The same is the case with a bowl from the Hilprecht collection, which lists magical sounds scaring away the Angel of Death.[566] In another bowl from the British Museum Collection, he is referred to as Qaspiel, the Angel of Death.[567] This last bowl belongs to the curse genre, and the Angel of Death is featured in it as the entity sworn to activate the incantation formula, and not as the exorcised entity.

[558] Text Gorea 2003, B2: 1-2, Ford, forthcoming.
[559] Text Gorea 2003, B2: 3-5;18-19, ibid.
[560] Text Gorea 2003, B2: 5**;**16. ibid.
[561] Ibid.
[562] For example Text JBA 20 (MS 2053/150):4, Shaked, Ford and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 126.
[563] Text Gorea 2003, B2: 14-15, Ford, forthcoming.
[564] Text Gorea 2003, B2:15, ibid.
[565] Text Montgomery 3 (CBS 2963):6;9**;** 10, Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur* 127.
[566] Text HS 3005: 8-9, Ford, forthcoming.
[567] Text 040A (BM 91767):2, Levene, *Jewish Aramaic Curse Texts from Late-Antique Mesopotamia*, 119.

- **The Evil Inclination** – This is another entity joining the Angel of Death and Satan in this incantation formula. The Babylonian Talmud uses this term to define an individual's sins, but it also appears in a cosmic sense, causing suffering and evil in the world, as we can see in Reish Lakish's equation of the Evil Inclination with demonic beings such as the Angel of Death and Satan, stating their synonymity – "Satan, the Evil Inclination, and the Angel of Death are one" (*bBB* 16a).[568] This perception is expressed in Gušnazdukh's incantation bowl in the exorcism of this tormenting trio. The Angel of Death and Satan are exorcised by power of the angels' and God's names. The Evil Inclination is exorcised by a name of the author herself "*yehudit yehudit*."[569]
- ***Ridyā*** [570] – A mythical creature joining this chain of demons and spirits is *Ridya*.[571] This creature has been identified as a link between rabbinic culture and Sasanian, mythology. It is positioned in the Babylonian Talmud between two abysses (*bTaan* 25b), and is presented as a three-legged ass, purifying the cosmic sea in the Bundahišn – a Zoroastrian text. In the Babylonian Talmud, this creature serves as mediator in the mythological hydrologic processes.[572] In Gušnazdukh's incantation formula, however, Ridyā is incarnated as a negative creature, which can be defeated with the help of God's and angels' names.

On the positive side, Gušnazdukh mentions a rare angel's name – Akatriel Yah[573] – and uses its power to exorcise of the Angel of Death. As far as I know this name appears only in one other incantation bowl, from a private collection.[574] The Babylonian Talmud mentions Akatriel Yah once, as a divine entity representing the God of Israel encountered by Rabbi Yishmael ben Elisha at the innermost sanctum of the temple (*bBer* 7a). Akatriel Yah is seen by him, seated upon a high and exalted throne – predominately used to depict God, not his envoys. The

[568] The Evil Inclination, a representative of the sexual drive in rabbinic literature, goes through a dualistic process, in which its evil power is joined by a positive element, expressed in traditions such as the one from the Land of Israel, stating that "the Evil Inclination is very good […] Were it not for the evil inclination, no man would build a house, take a wife and beget children" (*Genesis Rabbah* 9:7). For further discussion of the Evil Inclination in the Talmud, see Ishay Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires "Yetzer Hara" and the Problem of Evil in Late Antiquity* (University of Pennsylvania press 2011).

[569] Text Gorea 2003, B2: 18, M. Gorea suggests that evil inclination is exorcised by the power of verses quoted from the book of Job, Gorea, "Trois nouvelles coupes magiques araméennes," 84.

[570] For more about Ridyā see Reuven Kiperwasser, and Dan D. Y. Shapira. "Irano-Talmudica I: The Three-Legged Ass and Ridyā in B. Taanit: Some Observations about Mythic Hydrology in the Babylonian Talmud and in Ancient Iran," *AJS Review* 32 (2008) 101-116.

[571] Text Gorea 2003, B2:3;18, Ford, forthcoming.

[572] Kiperwasser, "The Three-Legged Ass and Ridyā," 111.

[573] Text Gorea 2003, B2:15, Ford, forthcoming.

[574] Text James Nathan Ford No. 282 (No. 6665, Hixenbaugh ancient art) Dutch private collection, forthcoming.

Babylonian Talmud also bestows this angel with the divine title "Akatriel Yah the Lord of Hosts."

4.6.3 The Magical power of the name

The magic perception of names, words, and letters is expressed in Gušnazdukh's incantation formula in her writing of God's names and with permutations of the letters used to spell these names:

ומה שמו סקסין סקסאין סיקיון וסיקיון והו פתה ופתיה קץ שמו חיקרין קראן... בישמו הוא רבה זהו זזז...

"What is his name? *sqswn sqsʾwn syqywn* and *syqywn*, and he is *pth* and *ptyh, qṣ* is his name, he is called *ḫyqryn*, fever and chills and burning…";[575] "…In his name *hwʾ rbh zhw zzz*…" [576]

Most of these names are known from nowhere else, and we would not have considered them as elements of the divine name had this not been clearly stated. It is important to remember that we are discussing the magical cosmos, which is a realm that promotes weirdness. Parts of the magic texts of the incantation bowls usually include words that are meaningless, and have irregular speech and incorrect syntax. Gušnazdukh used the concept in which the name of God appears in every name, letter and space, [577] and added incomprehensible sounds that established the magical power that would change reality. This element is evident in the next sentence, which was written in Hebrew:

וש{מו}ם שימות שם שימות ומישום ומישום{ום} שמו מיתוך אותותו ואותות מיתוך מראה ומראה מיתוך עמוק ועמוק מיתוך הסתר וסתר {וסתר} מיתוך הנקב ונקב מיתוך גילוי.>

"A name of names, a name of names, and from a name, and from the name of his name from among his letters, and letters from a vision, and a vision from the deep, and the deep from among the hidden, and the hidden from among the pronounced, and the prononced from within the revealed".[578]

To this mixture of languages (Aramaic and Hebrew), Gušnazdukh adds the magical element of the vocal language. As seen above the variety of god's names – "*sqswn sqsʾwn syqywn* and

[575] Text Gorea 2003, B2:13, Ford, forthcoming.
[576] Text Gorea 2003, B2:17, ibid.
[577] Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*,163.
[578] Text Gorea 2003, B2:11-12, Ford, forthcoming.

syqywn,"[579] These are sounds that mimic the hissing voices of a snake. In addition to the hissing sounds Gušnazdukh uses another vocal element. The Aramaic word שמא (name) – or שמו in Hebrew (his name) is repeated multiple times. To these words we add the word שמיא – sky. These three words resonant the magic sound SHHH, echoing 22 times in a particular rhythm throughout the formula, creating an onomatopoetic reminder of the magic term לחש נחש (spell in Hebrew).[580] In this orchestra, God's names turn into a magical tool, which can be pronounced or written, and at the same time, prosuce a magical sound that creates a form of control over demons, allowing their exorcism and the healing of the beneficiary.

Finally, between all these names, sounds, and syllables, Gušnazdukh adds an unexpected and uncommon element – her own name, in first person. The name Gušnazdukh daughter of Muškōy, appearing in NFP style, is used as a powerful magical element that is capable of scaring away the angel of death:

> ואילו שמותן שלמלאך המות עריק ומיתקפי ומיתבלע מן קדמוהי אנא גושנזדוך בת מושכוי וכל שום דאית לי
>
> "These are the names from which the Angel of Death flees, and is paralyzed, and disappears/hides from them. **I, Gušnazdukh daughter of Muškōy, and every name that I have**." [581]

To her own name, used as a means of defeating the angel of death, Gušnazdukh adds a double "*yehudit yehudit*" יהודית יהודית [582] (female Jewish), as means of defeating the Evil Inclination. This reference to herself as Jewish and female makes her an eligible, valid, "kosher" Jewish woman, from whose body the Evil Inclination is exorcised like a disease – in a glaring contrast to the Mishnaic tradition: "What constitutes [a violation of] *yehudit* custom? [If] she goes out [in public] with her hair uncovered; [if] she spins [thread] in the market, and converses [flirtatiously] with any man" (*mKet* 7:6).

Gušnazdukh exorcises the entities tormenting her, all of which appear in the Babylonian Talmud. She enlists the power of God's names, and the names of angels, to fight Satan, the Angel of Death, *Ridyā*, and even the Evil Inclination, which is an element often considered a threat to men only. This battle is conducted using elements drawn from the world of the rabbnic

[579] Text Gorea 2003, B2:13 ibid.
[580] Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 60.
[581] Text Gorea 2003, B2:15-16, Ford, forthcoming.
[582] Text Gorea 2003, B2:18, ibid.

sages, including the most powerful angel, Akatriel-Yah. This knowledge of talmudic lore and traditions reflected in the incantation bowl is a tool with which Gušnazdukh creates an anti-talmudic incantation bowl. The "wordplay" performed on God's names, angels' names, and of course her own, is the epitome of this subversive incantation bowl. Gušnazdukh in fact states that her name is equal in power to those of angels and God. There is no doubt in my mind, that such a subversive statement could not have been the product of a paintbrush held by a man from the rabbinic milieu. We can therefore infer that this incantation bowl was conceived in the mind and the hands of a woman – a broad-minded sorcerous woman, who was well versed in rabbinic lore and magic alike.

5. The Subversive Nature of the Female Authors

The five incantation formulae composed by female authors writing in NFP style, feature unique, hapax legomenon elements, and trespass the boundaries of commonly used incantation formulae. In my opinion, the content of these five authors' bowls also contain the evidence that the bowls analyzed here could not possibly have been written by a man from the rabbinic milieu. The first proof is the unmistakably female name of our NFP authors. A member of this milieu is highly unlikely to have chosen a woman's name as a pseudonym, or a clear female epithet like "maidservant of heaven." Further evidence is provided in the elements used in the incantation formula, in addition to the materials found in many other bowls, which constitute a form of subversion:

- **Reversal of gender hierarchy** – Performed by Komiš daughter of Mahlafta in changing the place of the mother and father.
- **Challenging conventions regarding women's inherent domesticity** – Gušnazdukht daughter of Aḥat sits on the threshold, at the gate of the city, in a crowded location. This is a social gender statement. The rabbis would frown upon women in public, where they had no control over them.
- **Using God's name in defiance** of the Halakhah - Gušnazdukh daughter of Muškōy states in first person that her own name is equal in power to the name of God, and Gušnazdukht daughter of Aḥat makes a syncretistic statement in referring to Tiqos, king of demons and Liliths, with the explicit name of the God of Israel.

- **Performance of halakhically forbidden actions** –Komiš daughter of Mahlafta and Giyonay daughter of Lalay perform the magic act of divorce, which is essentially different than the halakhic divorce since it involves a woman who divorces one or more female entities.
- **Control over professional activity reserved for men** – Gušnazdukht daughter of Aḥat and Dukhtīč daughter of Bahāroy have the power to control supernatural entities and force them to return to Netherworld, a performance which was exclusively conducted by a Mesopotamian exorcist, the *āšipu* who was always a man.

Knowledge, wide horizons, and sophistication are beautifully demonstrated by the five female authors writing in NFP style. The "lesson" that the Babylonian Amora, Ameimar, received from the "chief of sorcerous women" (*bPes* 110b) is therefore not surprising. The talmudic dialogue between the amora and the magical specialist verifies the statistics shown here, proving that women indeed had a reputation of being magical experts, an expertise which they demonstrated in many ways, including the writing of incantation bowls tailor made especially for their extraordinary measurements.

Chapter 6
Conclusion

This study concentrates on removing the veil that had concealed the female authors who wrote the incantation bowls. Archaeological excavations in Nippur exposed previously buried treasures. Together with the patriarchal cultural heroes, these bowls brought to light women – ordinary women, sorcerous women, and miraculously, women authors. The incantation bowls have the power to prove that women wrote magical texts, and against all odds, to salvage from the magic spirals, some of the names of these female authors. This phenomenon of women writing incantation bowls did not develop in a vacuum. Therefore we had to go to other geographical regions (synchronically), exposing women scribes in Alexandria, and to the distant past (diachronically), tracing skillful women in Mesopotamia, whose occupation was writing. History almost never gives voice to women, to their words, their writing, and the narratives in which they are involved. This research lifts the veil off an extraordinary population of female authors.

My conclusion touches on the following five aspects:

1. Tradition of biased research.
2. Rabbis and sorcerous women.
3. The gendered essence of the Demoness Lilith.
4. Beneficiaries of the incantation bowls.
5. Female authors of the incantation bowls.

1. Tradition of Biased Research

Up to now no proof whatsoever has been produced to support the notion that men, and only men, had been the authors of the incantation bowls. Such claims are the result of a false premise, that women were not capable of reading, let alone writing,[583] and that they were completely reliant on men in all aspects of their daily life. Wrong as it turned out to be, this biased consensus, which assumes that men from the rabbinic milieu had written the incantation bowls, has created a vicious circle, quoted time and again. The source of the problem seems to be in women being categorized as domestic creatures, and as lacking education. Such perceptions have led to viewing women as intellectually inferior, and this was then also applied to their

[583] Mock, "Were the Rabbis Troubled by Witches?," 38.

professional abilities.[584] This diminished status of women not only reduced the efforts made to document their activities in real time; it also blocked their way in reaching the attention of scholars. A similar phenomenon is seen in the field of magic. Scholars contend that women were not involved in the textual aspects of sorcery, and that their expertise was restricted to medicinal herbs and various concoctions,[585] but as Gideon Bohak argues, talmudic magic prescriptions, have not come down to us as recipes.[586] The long list of magical recipes preserved in *bGit* 68b-70a is usually presented anonymously. Ironically, the woman Em's potions, medicines and treatments in the Talmud are anything but anonymous – they all bear her "signature."

The rabbis accused sorcerous women of illegitimate sorcery, as opposed to their own very similar activity, which they designated "religion." The sorcerous women's perspective itself was never documented and researchers continue to describe sorcery using the terminology of the rabbis. By going in the same path paved by the rabbis, and not challenging this way of thinking to consider the women's, and particularly the sorcerous women's point of view, contemporary scholarly research adds insult to injury and succumbs to stereotypes which by no means reflected reality.

Nevertheless, some scholars, namely Erica Hunter, Rebecca Lesses, and Yakov Elman had suggested that some of the incantation bowls were written by women, but this notion has mostly been disregarded by other researchers. Scholarly research continues to this day to look at the question from a gender-biased perspective. I only hope that this study, and others like it, will shed some light on women's past, occupations, education, and in the case at hand, on the female authors of at least some, and possibly all of the incantation bowls.

It is important to remember that a story, any story, that is being told over and over again, eventually becomes an integral part of life, tradition, and collective memory. In some cases, the story has no connection to reality, but it is nevertheless regarded as correct by all kinds of experts. Even in cases where there would have been an obvious political motivation behind the story being told the way it is, it is ultimately accepted into tradition, and treated with utmost veneration. Researchers do something very similar, when they vehemently repeat and reproduce these prejudiced views, refusing to relinquish them in favor of a new narrative, despite new

[584] Ilan, "Salome's Medicinal Recipe and Jewish Women Doctors in Antiquity."
[585] Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 393.
[586] Ibid.

evidence. This bias is typical in studies concerning women, in general, and no less in the study of the incantation bowls.

2. Rabbis and Sorcerous Women

A gender perspective highlights the fact that the Babylonian Talmud treats all women as witches. It states explicitly: "most women are engaged in sorcery" (*bSanh* 67a). The rabbis tend to discover damning evidence for witchcraft in any activity performed by women, even the most innocent and mundane ones. The power of sorcerous women was perceived as deriving from illegitimate sources, and any object reflecting such powers – in this case the incantation bowls – was regarded as dangerous to the rabbis' culture and society.[587]

The rabbis promoted an atmosphere of delegitimization, which in today's terms would be described as aggressive marketing: creating a negative image and bad publicity for women in general, and sorcerous women in particular. The rabbis' own magic was perceived as part of the hegemonic culture, and became an integral part of rabbinic studying, teaching, and discourse.[588] The sorcerous women's magic, on the other hand, was marketed in rabbinic discourse as a menacing anti-culture. In this manner, the rabbis were able to control, discipline and regiment the sorcerous women. It seems that they embraced the magical techniques used by the sorcerous women, while at the same time fighting them. Even though the sorcery performed by the rabbis and that performed by the women was essentially the same, the source of power was perceived as different. The rabbis' power was declared "kosher" since it originated in the Torah and the names of God. The magic activities of the sorcerous women, on the other hand, were disqualified as syncretistic, bordering on the idolatrous.

We can assume that the women authors who wrote the incantation bowls were representative of an entire community of people, practicing different kinds of magic, which in some cases must have entailed the writing of texts. Chances are that magical practice, especially when it comes to bowl-writing, also consisted of rituals of preparation, writing, and burial.[589] The language used in the bowls is rich and thick, containing words that seem redundant, and the incantation formulae flow with excessive repetitions, implying that they might have been part of a

[587] Seidel, "'Release Us and We Will Release You'" 46.
[588] Levinson, "Enchanting Rabbis," 72.
[589] Shaked, Ford and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 7.

performative, oral ritual.[590] This would mean that the rabbis and the sorcerous women were service providers, competing over the same market of ritual consumers. The female guild, apparently described in Ameimar's words, was competing against the rabbis, who were acting as an exclusively male sect.[591]

The rabbis considered themselves as having magical powers and proficiency in ancient wisdom and in the secrets of mysticism,[592] but narratives of magic competitions between them and sorcerous women, which were held every now and then (*bSanh* 67b; *bHul* 110b; *bGit* 39b) show that they used the same magical practices as the sorcerous women. These competitions are related in rabbinic literature as in carnival-like settings – in marketplaces, bathhouses, inns, or "outside the city" – in a liminal space away from the center, on the margins, out of the jurisdiction of norms and socially acceptable behaviour.

There is also a sense of intimidation and threat by sorcery – especially by women – in places "outside the city," in the liminal space where "the daughters of Israel burn incense to witchcraft" (*bBer* 53a). This motif of an activity performed away from the institutionalized hegemonic center highlights the labeling of sorcerous women as belonging to an anti-culture,[593] from the rabbis' point of view. However, this competition could also, alternatively, be viewed from the perspective of the sorcerous women – the same women by and large depicted as the losers in these challenges.[594] I believe that from the way these stories are told one can deduce in fact, that in Babylonian antiquity, sorcerous women and their magical powers were a force to be reckoned with. The thousands of incantation bowls discovered point to diverse financial activities, operative participation in the community, and control over the periphery. A review of the precautions taken by the rabbis against women suspected of involvement in witchcraft, reveals women with an enormous scope of magical knowledge, on the one hand, and on the other hand, of inadequate rabbis trying to control and police female practice, to no avail.[595]

Most scholars today agree that in their day, the rabbis' power was expressed in their internal discussions, among themselves, but it did not actually manifest itself in reality. I would like to use Mirian Peskowitz's theory, which she calls the "formula of inversion" – this formula

[590] Häberl, "Aramaic Incantation Texts between Orality and Textuality," 396-397.
[591] Fishbane, "Most Women Engage in Sorcery," 34.
[592] Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 404.
[593] Levinson, "Enchanting Rabbis," 75.
[594] For more see Seidel, *Studies in Ancient Jewish Magic*, 184-189.
[595] Lesses, "Exe(or)cising Power," 343.

addresses the relationship between gender and power. With regard to the power dynamics within the family, she suggests that one can actually observe a role reversal in terms of control, so that power only exists on a verbal level, without having any real content or viability in reality. In her words: "In these interchanges, a figure who seems to have power is cast as less powerful or powerless, and a figure who would seem to be less powerful is recast as powerful. However, whereas in explanatory accounts these figures are switched, the actual positions, advantages, and rights do not change. The powerless do not really become powerful and those with power do not really lose it. Paradoxically, this formula both discusses power and keeps its workings invisible."[596]

Peskowitz may have written this about the family, but her formula can be applied to the power struggles between the rabbis and the sorcerous women. The sorcerous women, who were in power positions in reality, are given a disadvantaged or powerless (but always demonic) image in rabbinic discourse. The sector which is the source of their disadvantaged portrayal – the rabbis – does not gain power in reality by this presentation, but presents itself in an exclusively verbal power, which can only be found between the pages of the Babylonian Talmud. In their writings, the rabbis declared an all-out war on sorcerous women, and their battle is a sign of their attempt to portray themselves as having the upper hand by hostile and stereotypical labeling of their opponents.

Again, it should be emphasized that, phenomenologically speaking, the terms "religious scholar" and "sorcerer"; "miracle" and "witchcraft"; "religion" and "magic" – are basically synonymous. Sorcery, witchcraft, and similar derivatives are used rhetorically for hostile labeling of the religious practice of the "other."[597] These definitions were applied to sorcerous women, and to women (and men) authors who were practicing magic, and inter alia wrote incantation bowls.

3. The Gendered Essence of Demoness Lilith

The pattern in which Lilith is featured in the incantation bowls can serve as a research method, allowing us to trace and specify the population of incantation-bowl users in terms of gender and marital status. Lilith the Demoness was a popular entity to be exorcised in the incantation bowls,

[596] Miriam Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies: Rabbis, Gender, and History* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1997) 114.
[597] Ilan, *Silencing the Queen*, 385.

especially amongst families, i.e. married couples with children, but also prominently amongst women proprietors.

In marked contrast to her frequent appearances in the incantation bowls, the Demoness Lilith receives very few talmudic references. The Lilith that emerges from the pages of the Babylonian Talmud signifies a threat to men, who through her allegedly fall victim to their uncontrollable Evil Inclination. Viewing Lilith through this rabbinic gendered prism, she appears to be a product of the talmudic conception of women and their sexuality as dangerous, seductive, and contaminating. The Demoness Lilith represents the antithesis of the married, "kosher" Jewish woman.

The Talmudic demoness Lilith is ascribed three main attributes – wings, long, unruly hair, and nudity. The winged-image enhances the threat posed by the demoness, due to the blurring of boundaries between godly and demonic spaces. Lilith's wings are revealed in her illustrations on the base of the incantation bowls. Her second attribute, long unruly hair, links her directly to seduction; so much so that according to the Mishnah, a man may divorce his wife without paying her the sum of her *ketubbah* if she leaves the house without covering her hair (*bKet* 67a). When the third attribute of nudity is added to the first two, fear turns into sheer horror. The messed-up hair and nudity are also linked to the *sotah* in the Book of Numbers mentioned in the incantation of Komiš daughter of Mahlafta, described in chapter 5. Revealing a woman's hair and the tearing of her clothes as part of the ritual of the *sotah* reveals the woman, accused of being unfaithful to her huband, as a promiscuous prostitute, adding an element of religious sin to the official accusation of adultery.[598] The demoness Lilith is synonymous in essence to the *sotah*, in terms of the fears the rabbis had of women, and their need to exercise control over them, and particularly over their sexuality.[599] These concepts of religious sin and adultery found in the Talmudic image of Lilith are also present in the incantation bowls from the divorce genre, where we discover a symbiotic relationship between Lilith and the *sotah*. In the incantation bowls, instead of marrying and having children, Lilith separates married couples, harms pregnant women, and kills their babies. The demoness causes everyone to sin, unleashing her seductive hands in the direction of all members of the family – men and women alike. The reality reflected in the incantation bowls of the divorce genre is not bound by rabbinic law.

[598] Rosen-Zvi, *The Rite That Was Not*, 182.
[599] Ishay Rosen-Zvi, "'Tractate Kinui': A Forgotten Tannaitic Debate about Marriage, Freedom of Movement and Sexual Supervision," *JSIA* 5 (2006) 21-48 esp. p. 33.

Unlike the rabbinic divorce document, which can only be given by the husband to his flesh-and-blood wife, the magical divorce formula, which exorcises Lilith, boldly allows a woman to write the document in order to exorcise a supernatural entity from her house, not only female entities, but also male ones. Where demons and human beings coexist and communicate with one another, gender no longer plays a role.

In contrast to the Talmudic version of the demoness, the threat posed by Lilith of the incantation bowls is manageable. The incantation formula vouches her exorcism as soon as the bowl is buried under the threshold. It also serves as a guarantee that the demoness will never returns to that house, and cures any aliments and torments suffered by the household members. Lilith of the incantation bowls reflects existential fears in everyday life, not restricted to men, but rather common to everyone – men, women, and families.

4. Beneficiaries of the incantation bowls

From the beneficiaries' perspective, the expertise of the magical practitioners was judged according to results, not according to the religious or ethnic origins of the magical ritual, or gender of the authors. The users did not care whether the formula was derived from Jewish culture or from Mesopotamian – for them, they were of equal value. Some of the beneficiaries purchased several bowls, each with a different religious orientation. Some women ordered bowls in larger quantities – 5,[600] 10,[601] and even 40. [602] From the contents of the spiral formulae, we are able to gather that these particular women owned assets, possibly even real estate.[603]

The incantation formula was adjusted to fit the needs of the client, whose matronymic was also incorporated into the formula. The bowls were purchased by women, men, and families. In terms of division between the genders, statistics show that women purchased almost half of the incantation bowls, in accordance with the ratio typical of the magical cosmos. It should be taken into account that these figures are presumably lower than they actually were in reality, due to a bias in the way patriarchal societies functioned. Two other findings worth mentioning here are

[600] Shaked, Ford and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 225.
[601] Ibid., 349.
[602] Shaked, "Transmission and Transformation of Spells," 191 note 13.
[603] Morony, "Magic and Society in Late Sasanian Iraq," 102.

that one quarter of the women purchased incantation bowls in which only their own names featured, and that in one tenth of the bowls which were purchased by married couples, the name of the woman appears before her husband's name.

5. Female Authors of the Incantation Bowls

As I have shown in this study, documentation of women involved in writing dates back to third millennium B.C.E. in Mesopotamia. Palaces and temples regularly employed women as scribes, physicians, and exorcists.[604] In Late Antiquity, the period in which the incantation bowls were written in the Sasanian Empire, Zoroastrian women were sent to pursue religious studies in "colleges," where they gained proficiency and served as priestesses and teachers in those educational facilities, and later in religious institutions. Outside the realm of religion, women participated in business management, law, and advocacy. These were all occupations which required not only simple writing skills, but real proficiency in the art of writing. To those Sasanian women, we can also add the Jewish women of rabbinic descent, who acquired general as well as rabbinic education. Regarding women's writing, the plentiful restrictions the rabbis set on it reveal how adamant the rabbis were in their attempts to deprive women of knowledge in reading and writing, as a means of controlling them. However, despite the rabbis' best efforts, these restrictions reveal that the need to set them arose from women actually participating in this kind of activity in the first place.[605]

Women in Mesopotamia have a history of literacy, and at the same time, also a long tradition of sorcery. It should come as no surprise, then, that women practiced magical writing, and that female authors wrote incantation bowls. These expert women wrote bowls in a unique style that allowed them to express themselves by incorporating their own names into the incantation formulae. These masters of the magic art created special formulae, relying on their own magical expertise, by shifting away from speaking in the name of God, to speaking in their own name and performing the magical act by themselves. These female authors changed the essence of the otherwise conventional formula, by incorporating subversive elements. Because the incantation bowls are by nature a medium tailor-made in an "haute couture" style to fit the clients' measurements – strong subversive hues were designed by the female authors to fit the magical formulae they wrote for themselves.

[604] Lecompte, "Representation of Women in Mesopotamian Lexical Lists," 38-45.
[605] Ilan, *Mine and Yours are Hers*, 166.

We know eight female authors by name, and I would like to add Em to this list. Em, Abaye's teacher and instructor (מרבינתא), mentioned scores of times in the Babylonian Talmud, whose formulae are quoted by Abaye, appears – at least to me – like a physician well versed in magic, and as such, deserving of the title "female author." Unlike the names of most women, Em's name managed to find its way into the Babylonian Talmud.

Outspoken criticism is, and always has been perceived as a shock to the system. The cracks they had carved in the patriarchal world could, over time, undermine its religious, social, and political institutions. This would also explain why the rabbis tried so hard to keep women away from the public sphere, inside the homes.

If we were to invite guest scholars from another planet, scholars who did not have our history and prejudice imprinted on their DNA, and ask them to try to find out who wrote the incantation bowls, they would likely study the magic contents of the bowl, the traditions common to the region in the previous eras, and in the present. They would begin their research from the texts at hand, and discover that experts known by their full matronymics had written 8.7% of all incantation bowls. Our scholars would then expand the scope of their research, tracing the origins of the materials used by the incantation bowl authors in magic tradition. They would study magical texts in cuneiform script, and historical sources in Aramaic. It would not take them very long to spot the close affinity between women and magic in these two corpora: the clay tablets would reveal an abundance of rituals against witches and witchcraft; and throughout the talmudic text, they would find plenty of statements hinting that "mostly women are engaged in witchcraft." The scholars would perhaps wonder: was this kind of activity dependent on one's gender, or perhaps some inherently feminine trait? One thing is certain – our scholars would have infered that there is a strong link between women and magic. Subsequently, they would have drawn two further conclusions. First, from Ameimar's account of "the chief of sorcerous women," the scholars would infer that she was an expert in magic, and the head of a community of magic practitioners. And secondly, from the statistics, they would learn that most of the experts in magic writing had been women whose names are featured in their own incantation formulae. At the end of this visit from outer space, the scholars would ultimately and decisively conclude: "given all the data gathered thus far, the only logical and obvious conclusion is that women were writing incantation bowls."

If scholars from outer space can reach these conclusions, why can't we?

Bibliography

Abusch, Tzvi, *The Witchcraft Series Maqlû* (Society of Biblical Literature 2015).

Abusch, Tzvi, and Daniel Schwemer, *Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Rituals* (Leiden Brill 2011).

Abusch, Tzvi, "The Socio-Religious Framework of the Babylonian Witchcraft Ceremony *Maqlû*: Some Observations on the Introductory Section of the Text, Part I," Tzvi Abusch (ed.), *Riches Hidden in Secret Places, Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Memory of Thorkild Jacobsen* (Eisenbrauns 2002) 1-34.

Abusch, Tzvi, "Ishtar," in Karl van der Toorn (ed.), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Leiden Brill 1999) 452.

Abusch, Tzvi, and K. Van der Toorn, *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretative Perspectives* (Styx Publications 1999) 1-34.

Ahuvia, Mika, *Israel among the Angels: A Study of Angels in Jewish Texts from the Fourth to Eighth Century CE* (Ph.D. Diss. Princeton University 2014).

Alic, Margaret, "Women and Technology in Ancient Alexandria: Maria and Hypatia," *Women's Studies lnternational Quarterly* 4 (1981) 305-312.

Allen, Spencer L., *The Splintered Divine: A Study of Istar, Baal, and Yahweh Divine Names and Divine Multiplicity in the Ancient Near East* (Berlin De Gruyter 2015) 143-199.

Aubin, Melissa M., *Gendering Magic in Late Antique Judaism* (Ph.D. Diss. Duke University 1998).

Bagnall, Roger, and Raffaella Cribiore, *Women's Letters from Ancient Egypt, 300 BC-AD 800* (University of Michigan Press 2006).

Baker, C. M., *Rebuilding the House of Israel: Architecture of Gender in Jewish Antiquity* (Stanford University Press 2002).

Bar-Ilan, Meir, *Some Jewish Women in Antiquity* (Scholars Press 1998).

Barrett, Caitlin E., "Was Dust Their Food and Clay Their Bread? Grave Goods, the Mesopotamian Afterlife and the Liminal Role of Inana/Ishtar," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 7 (2007) 7-65.

Beaulieu, Paul-Alain, "The Social and Intellectual Setting of Babylonian Wisdom Literature," in Richard J. Clifford, (ed.), *Wisdom Literature in Mesopotamia and Israel* (SBL Symposium Series 36; Society of Biblical Literature; Atlanta 2007).

Beaulieu, Paul-Alain, and John P. Britton, "Rituals for an Eclipse Possibility in the 8th Year of Cyrus," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 46 (1994) 73-86.

Beer, M., "A Reconsideration of Three Ancient Seals from Persia," *Tarbiz 52* (1983) 435-440.

Bell, Catherine, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford University press 1992).

Biesecker, B., "Coming to Terms with Recent Attempts to Write Women into the History of Rhetoric," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 25 (1992) 140-161.

Bhayro, Siam, "Divorcing a Demon: Incantation Bowls and BT Gittin 85b," in Markham J Geller (ed.), *The Archeology and Material Culture of the Babylonian Talmud* (Leiden Brill 2015) 121-131.

Bivar, A. D. H., *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum: Stamp Seals. II: The Sassanian Dynasty*, (London; Trustees of the British Museum 1969).

Bohak, Gideon, Yuval Harari and Shaul Shaked (eds.), *Continuity and Innovation in the Magical Tradition* (Leiden; Brill 2011) 219-244.

Bohak, Gideon., *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge University Press 2008).

Bottéro, Jean, "The Intelligence of the World," in Jean Bottéro, Clarisse Herrenschmidt, and Jean-Pierre Vernant (eds.), *Ancestor of the West: Writing, Reasoning, and Religion in Mesopotamia* (University of Chicago Press 2000) 34-50.

Bottéro, Jean, *Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods*, (The University of Chicago press 1992) 140-142.

Boyarin, Daniel, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (University of California Press 1993).

Brooten, Bernadette, *Women as Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue*, (Brown Judaic Studies 1982).

Brosius, Maria, "Women in Pre-Islamic Persia," *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online Edition* 2017, available at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/women-i

Brown, David, "Astral Divination in the Context of Mesopotamian Divination: Medicine, Religion, Magic, Society, and Scholarship," *East Asian Science, Technology, and Medicine* 25 (2006) 69-126.

Brunner, C. H., "Sasanian Seals in the Moore Collection: Motive and Meaning in Some Popular Subjects," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 14 (1979) 33-50.

Cale, Johnson, J. "Depersonalized Case Histories in the Babylonian Therapeutic Compendia," in J. Cale Johnson (ed.), *In the Wake of the Compendia: Infrastructural Contexts and the Licensing of Empiricism in Ancient and Medieval Mesopotamia* (Berlin De Gruyter 2015) 289-292.

Caplice Richard I., *The Akkadian Namburbu Texts: An Introduction* (Undena publications 1974).

Choksy, J. K., *Evil, Good, and Gender: Facets of the Feminine in Zoroastrian Religious History* (New York; Peter Lang 2002).

Choksy, J. K. and. F. M. Kotwal, "KUSTĪG," *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online Edition* 2017, available at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kustig

Eliade, Mircea, *Images and Symbols* (Princeton 1991).

Dan, Joseph, *The Ancient Jewish Mysticism* (Broadcast University Series, Ministry of Defense, Israel, 1989) (Hebrew).

Ellis, Richard S., "Well, Dog My Cats! A Note on the *uridimmu*," in Ann K. Guinan, Maria de J. Ellis, et al. (eds.), *If a Man Builds a Joyful House: Assyriological Studies in Honor of Erle Verdun Leichty* (Leiden Brill 2006).

Elman, Yaakov, "Saffron, Spices, and Sorceresses: Magic Bowls and the Babylonian Talmud," in Kimberly B. Stratton and Dayna S. Kalleres (eds.), *Daughters of Hecate*: *Women and Magic in the Ancient World* (Oxford University Press 2014) 365-385.

Elman, Yaakov, "Scripture versus Contemporary Needs: A Sasanian/Zoroastrian Example," *Cardozo Law Review* 28 (2006) 153-169.

Elman, Yaakov, "Marriage and Marital Property in Rabbinic and Sasanian Law," in Catherine Hezser (ed.), *Rabbinic Law in its Roman and Near Eastern Context* (Tübingen; Mohr Siebeck 2003) 227-276.

Faraj, Ali H., *Coppe magiche dall'antico Iraq* (Lampi di Stampa, 2010) (Italian).

Farber, Walter, "Lamaštu: Agent of a Specific disease or a Generic Destroyer of Health?" in I. L. Finkel and M. J. Geller (eds.), *Disease in Babylonia* (Leiden Brill 2006) 137-145.

Farber, Walter, "How to Marry a Disease: Epidemics, Contagion, and a Magic Ritual against the 'Hand of the Ghost'," in H.F.J. Horstmanshoff and M. Stol (eds.), *Magic and Rationality in Ancient Near Eastern and Graeco-Roman Medicine* (Leiden Brill 2004) 117-132.

Frim, Daniel J., "'And It Was in the Dwelling of Rabbi Joshua bar Peraḥiah': Notes on the Anti-Demonic *Geṭ* in the Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Incantation Bowls," *Review of Rabbinic Judaism* 18 (2015) 192-226.

Fishbane, Simcha, "'Most Women Engage in Sorcery': An Analysis of Sorceresses in the Babylonian Talmud," *Jewish History* 7 (1993) 27-42.

Flemming, Rebecca, "Women, Writing and Medicine in the Classical World," *The Classical Quarterly New Series* 57 (2007) 257-279.

Fonrobert, Charlotte E. *Menstrual Purity: Rabbinic and Christian Reconstructions of Biblical Gender* (Stanford University Press 2002).

Ford, James Nathan, "The Ancient Mesopotamian Motif of *kidinnu*: Divine Protection (of Temple Cities and their Citizens)," in Uri Gabbay and Shai Secunda (eds.), *Encounters by the Rivers of Babylon* (Tübingen Mohr Siebeck 2014) 271-285.

Frankfurter, David, "Scorpion/Demon: On the Origin of the Mesopotamian Apotropaic Bowl," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 74 (2015) 9-18.

Frazer, James George, *The Golden Bough: A Study of Magic and Religion* (The Macmillan Company 1951).

Freedman, Sally, *If a City Is Set on a Height: The Akkadian Omen Series Šumma Alu ina Mele Šakin, vol.3: Tablets 41-63* (Eisenbrauns 2017).

Friedenberg D. M., *Sasanian Jewry and Its Culture: A Lexicon of Jewish and Related Seals* (Urbana; University of Illinois Press 2009).

Gabbay, Uri, "The King of the Demons: Pazuzu, Bagdana and Ašmedai," in Wayne Horowitz, Uri Gabbay and Filip Vukosavovic, (eds.), *A Woman of Valor: Jerusalem Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Joan Goodnick Westenholz* (Biblioteca del Proximo Oriente Antiguo 8. 2010) 57-67.

Geller, Markham J., "Magic Bowls Belong in Babylonia," in Herbert Niehr und Hermann Michael (eds.), *Zauber und Magie im antiken Palästina und in seiner Umwelt* (Harrassowitz Verlag 2017) 95-106.

Geller, Markham J., and Ludek Vacin, *Healing Magic and Evil Demons: Canonical Udug-hul Incantations* (Berlin De Gruyter 2016).

Geller, Markham J., *Melothesia in Babylonia: Medicine, Magic and Astrology in the Ancient Near East* (Berlin De Gruyter 2014).

Geller, Markham J., *Ancient Babylonian Medicine: Theory and Practice* (John Wiley & Sons 2010).

Geller, Markham J., "Phlegm and Breath: Babylonian contributions to Hippocratic Medicine," in L. Finkel and M. J.Geller (eds.), *Disease in Babylonia* (Leiden Brill 2007) 173-185.

Geller, Markham J., "Tablets and Magic Bowls," in Shaul Shaked (ed.) *Officina Magica: Essays on the Practice of Magic in Antiquity* (Leiden Brill 2005) 53-72.

Geller, Markham J., "Akkadian Healing Therapies in the Babylonian Talmud," *Max Planck Institute for the History of Science* (2004) 1-60.

Gignoux, Ph., "Court and Courties ii: In the Parthian and Sasanian Periods," *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online Edition* 2017, available at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/courts-and-courtiers-ii

Gignoux, Philippe, and Rika Gyselen, "Sceaux de femmes à l'époque Sassanide," in L. de Mayer, E. Haerinck (eds.), *Archaeologia Iranica et Orientalis*: *Miscellanea in Honorem Louis Van den Berghe* (Gand 1989) 877-893 (French).

Goldman, Leon, "Women ii: the Avesta" *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online Edition* 2017, available at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/women-ii-avesta

Gorea, Maria, "Trois nouvelles coupes magiques araméennes," *Semitica* 51 (2003) 73-85 (French).

Green, Anthony, "Neo-Assyrian Apotropaic Figures," *Iraq* 45 (1983) 87-96.

Grenet, F. "Religions du monde iranien ancient, Conférences de l'année 2012-2013," *Annuaire de l'École pratique des hautes études (EPHE), Section des sciences religieuses* 121 (2014) (French).

Groneberg, Brigitte, "The Role and Function of Goddesses in Mesopotamia," in Gwendolyn Leick (ed.), *The Babylonian World* (Routledge 2007) 319-331.

Gruenwald, Ithamar, *Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity: Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Brill Online E-Books 2014) 255-263.

Guichard, Michaël, and Marti Lionel, "Purity in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Paleo-Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian Periods," in Christian Frevel and Christophe Nihan (eds.), *Purity and the Forming of Religious Traditions in the Ancient Mediterranean World and Ancient Judaism* (Leiden Brill 2013) 47-114.

Gyselen, R., *Sasanian Seals and Sealings in the A. Saeedi Collection* (Peeters Publishers 2007).

Haines-Eitzen, Kim, *Guardians of Letters: Literacy, Power, and the Transmitters of Early Christian Literature* (Oxford University Press, 2000).

Haines-Eitzen, Kim, *The Gendered Palimpsest: Women, Writing, and Representation in Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press 2012).

Häberl, Charles G., "Aramaic Incantation Texts between Orality and Textuality," in Julia Rubanovich (ed.), *Orality and Textuality in the Iranian World: Patterns of Interaction Across the Centuries* (Leiden Brill 2015) 365-399.

Harviainen, Tapani, "Syncretistic and Confession Features in Mesopotamian Incantation Bowls," *Studia Orientalia* 70 (1993) 29–37.

Harviainen, Tapani, "A Syriac Incantation Bowl in the Finnish National Museum, Helsinki. A Specimen of Eastern Aramaic 'koiné'," *Studia Orientalia Electronica* 51 (1981) *Online Edition* 2017, Available at: https://journal.fi/store/article/view/49795

Haas, Christopher, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (JHU Press 1997).

Heeßel Nils P., "The Hands of the Gods: Disease Names and Divine Anger," in Irving L. Finkel and Markham J. Geller (eds.), *Disease in Babylonia* (Cuneiform Monographs 36 Leiden Brill 2007).

Herman, Geoffrey, A *Prince without a Kingdom, The Exilarch in the Sasanian Era* (Mohr Siebeck 2012).

Hintze, Almut, "Disseminating the Mazdayasnian Religion: An Edition of the Avestan Hērbedestān Chapter 5," in Werner Sundermann, Almut Hintze, and François de Blois (eds.), *Exegisti monumenta: Festschrift in Honour of Nicholas Sims-Williams* (Iranica 17; Wiesbaden 2009) 171-90.

Horowitz, Wayne, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* (Eisenbrauns 1998).

Hunter, Erica, "Incantation Bowls: A Mesopotamian Phenomenon? " *Orientalia, Nova Series* 65 (1996) 220-233.

Hunter, Erica "Combat and Conflict in Incantation Bowls: Studies on Two Aramaic Specimens from Nippur," in Markham J. Geller et al. (eds.), *Studia Aramaica* (Oxford University Press 1995) 61-75.

Ilan, Tal, "Salome's Medicinal Recipe and Jewish Women Doctors in Antiquity," forthcoming.

Ilan, Tal, "Jesus and Joshua ben Perahiah: A Jewish-Christian Dialogue on Magic in Babylonia," in Ra'anan S. Boustan, Klaus Herrmenn, Reimund Leicht, Annette Yoshiko Reed and Giuseppe Veltri (eds.), *Envisioning Judaism: Studies in Honor of Peter Schäfer on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2013) 985-995.

Ilan, Tal, Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity: The Western diaspora 330 BCE-650 CE, (Tübingen Mohr Siebeck 2011).

Ilan, Tal, *Silencing the Queen, The Literary Histories of Shelamzion and Other Jewish Women* (Tübingen Moher Serbeck;Tübingen 2006).

Ilan, Tal, *Integrating Women into Second Temple History* (Tübingen; J.C.B. Mohr 1999).

Ilan, Tal, *Mine and Yours are Hers: Retrieving Woman's History from Rabbinic Litrature* (Leiden Brill 1997).

Ilan, Tal, "Matrona and Rabbi Jose: An Alternative Interpretation," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 25 (1994) 18-51.

Isbell, Charles D., "The Story of the Aramaic Magical Incantation Bowls," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 41/1 (1978) 5-16.

Juusola, Hannu, "Who Wrote the Syriac Incantation Botwls?" *Studia Orientalia Electronica* 85 (2014) 75-92.

Katz, Dina, "Sumerian Funerary Rituals in Context," Nicola Laneri (ed.) *Performing Death: Social Analyses of Funerary Traditions in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean* (University of Chicago 2008) 167-188.

Dina Katz, "Death They Dispensed to Mankind the Funerary World of Ancient Mesopotamia," Historiae 2 (2005) 55-90

Katz, P.B., "Educating Paula: A Proposed Curriculum for Raising a 4th-Century Christian Infant," *Constructions of Childhood in Ancient Greece and Italy Hesperia* 41 (2007) 115-127.

Kiperwasser, Reuven and Dan D. Y. Shapira, "Irano-Talmudica I: The Three-Legged Ass and Ridyā in B. Ta anit: Some Observations about Mythic Hydrology in the Babylonian Talmud and in Ancient Iran," *AJS Review* 32 (2008) 101-116.

Lecompte, Camille, "Representation of Women in Mesopotamian Lexical Lists," in Brigitte Lion and Michel Cécile (eds.), *The Role of Women in Work and Society in the Ancient Near East* (Berlin De Gruyter 2016) 29-56.

Leigh Beckerleg, Catherine, *The 'Image of God' in Eden: the Creation of Mankind in Genesis 2:5-3:24 in Light of the mis pi pit pi and wpt-r Rituals of Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt* (Ph.D. Diss. Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations Harvard University 2009).

Lesses, Rebecca, "Exe(or)cising Power: Women as Sorceresses, Exorcists and Demonesses in Babylonian Society of Late Antiquity," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 69 (2001) 343-375.

Levene, Dan, *Jewish Aramaic Curse Texts from Late-Antique Mesopotamia: "May These Curses Go Out and Flee"* (Leidn Brill 2013).

Levene, Dan, "'This is a Qyblʾ for Overturning Sorceries': Form, Formula-Threads in a Web of Transmission," in Gideon Bohak, Yuval Harari and Shaul Shaked (eds.), *Continuity and Innovation in the Magical Tradition* (Leiden; Brill 2011) 219-244.

Levene, Dan, and Siam Bhayro, "'Bring to the gates … upon a good smell and upon good fragrances': An Aramaic Incantation Bowl for Success in Business," *Archiv für Orientforschung* 51 (2005/6) 242-246.

Levene, Dan, "Curse or Blessing: What's in the Magic Bowl*?" The Ian Karten Lecturer in Jewish History* (University of Southampton, 2002).

Levine, Baruch A., "Appendix," in Jacob Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia: Late Sasanian Times* (Leiden Brill 1970) 343-373.

Levinson, Joshua, "Enchanting Rabbis: Contest Narratives between Rabbis and Magicians in Late Antiquity," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 100 (2010) 54-94.

Lion, Brigitte, "Literacy and Gender," in Karen Radner and Eleanor Robson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture* (Oxford University Press 2011) 90-112.

Löhnert, Anne, "Manipulating the Gods: Lamenting in Context," in Karen Radner and Eleanor Robson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture* (Oxford University Press 2011) 402-417.

MacDougal, Renata, *Remembrance and the Dead in Second Millennium BC Mesopotamia* (Ph.D Diss. University of Leicester 2014).

Macuch, Maria, "Allusions to Sasanian Law in the Babylonian Talmud," in Carol Bakhos and Rahim Shayegan (eds.), *The Talmud in its Iranian Context* (Tübingen Mohr Siebeck 2010) 100-111.

Macuch, Maria, "Disseminating the Mazdayasnian Religion: An Edition of the Pahlavi Hērbedestān Chapter 5," in W. Sundermann, A. Hintze, F. de Blois, (eds.) *Exegisti monument. Festschrift in Honour of Nicholas Sims-Williams.* (Wiesbaden 2009) 251-277.

Macuch, Maria, "Mādayānī Hazār dādestān (Book of a Thousand Judgements)," *Encyclopædia Iranica, Online Edition* 2017, available at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/madayan-i-hazar-dadestan

Malekān, M., "A Study of the Imagery and Place of Women in the Sasanian Period: Sigillographic Evidence," *Sasanika Archiology* 14 (2013) 1-21.

Malinowski, Bronislaw, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (The Free Press, Ilunois 1948).

Malinowski, Bronisław, *Coral Gardens and Their Magic: A Study of the Methods of Tilling the Soil and of Agricultural Rites in the Trobriand Islands* (Allen and Unwin; London 1935).

Manekin Bamberger, Avigail, "Jewish Legal Formulae in the Aramaic Incantation Bowls," *Aramaic Studies* 13 (2015) 69-81.

Manekin Bamberger, Avigail, *Parallels between the Aramaic Incantation Bowls and the Babylonian Talmud* (Master's Thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem 2012) (Hebrew).

May, Natalie N., "The *Qersu* in Neo-Assyrian Cultic Setting: Its Origin, Identification, Depiction and Evolution," *Revue d'Assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale* 53 (2010) 441-489.

Minardi, Cara, *Re-Membering Ancient Women: Hypatia of Alexandria and her Communities* (Ph.D. Diss. Department of English Georgia State University 2011).

Mir-Hosseini, Ziba, Mansour Shaki and Jeanette Wakin, Family Law, *Encyclopædia Iranica, online edition*, 2017, available at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/family-law

Mock, Leo, "Were the Rabbis Troubled by Witches?" *Zutot* 1 (2001) 33-43.

Montgomery, James Alan, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur* (Philadelphia University museum 1913).

Morgenstern, Matthew, "Linguistic Features of the exts in this Volume," in Shaul Shaked, James Nathan Ford and Siam Bhayro (eds.), *Aramaic Bowl Spells: Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls* (Leiden Brill, 2013) 39-49.

Morgenstern, Matthew, "Notes on a Recently Published Magic Bowl," *Aramaic Studies* 2 (2000) 207-222.

Morony, Michael G., "Religion and the Aramaic Incantation Bowls," *Religion Compass* 1 (2007) 414–429.

Morony, Michael G., "Magic and Society in Late Sasanian Iraq," in Scott Noegel, Joel Thomas Walker and Brannon M. Wheeler (eds.), *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World* (Pennsylvania State University Press 2003).

Müller-Kessler, Christa, "Of Jesus, Darius, Marduk...: Aramaic Magic Bowls in the Moussaieff Collection," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 125 (2005) 219-240.

Müller-Kessler, Christa, *Die Zauberschalentexte in der Hilprecht-Sammlung, Jena, und weitere Nippur-Texte anderer Sammlungen* (Wiesbaden 2005) (German).

Müller-Kessler, Christa, and Tuvia Kwasman, "A Unique Talmudic Aramaic Incantation Bowl," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 120 (2000) 159-165.

Naveh, Joseph, and Shaul Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls* (The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2nd edition 1987).

Nevlin Porter, Barbara, "Ishtar of Nineveh and her Collaborator, Ishtar of Arbela, in the Reign of Assurbanipal," *Iraq* 66 (2004) 41-44.

Nissinen Martti, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East* (Biblical Literature 2003).

Oelsner, Joachim, "Incantations in sSouthern Mesopotamia: From Clay Tablets to Magical Bowls (Thoughts on the Decline of the Babylonian Culture)," in Shaul Shaked (ed.), *Officina Magica: Essays on the Practice of Magic in Antiquity* (Leiden Brill 2005) 31-52.

O'Keefe, Daniel Lawrence, *Stolen Lightning: The Social Theory of Magic* (Oxford 1982).

Oppenheim, A. Leo, "A Babylonian Diviner's Manual," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 33 (1974) 197-220.

Or, T., *Massekhet Betsah: Text, Translation and, Commentary* (Tübingen; Mohr Siebeck 2010).

Parker B. Simon, "Official Attitudes toward Prophecy at Mari and in Israel," *Vetus Testamentum* 43 (1993) 50-68.

Parker, H.N., "Galen and the Girls: Sources for Women Medical Writers Revisited," *Classical Quarterly* 62 (2012) 359-386.

Parker, H.N., "Women Doctors in Greece, Rome, and the Byzantine Empire," in Lilian R. Furst (ed.), *Women Physicians and Healers: Climbing a Long Hill* (University Press of Kentucky 1997) 131-151.

Patai, R., *The Jewish Alchemists: A History and Source Book* (Princeton University Press 2014).

Patai, Raphael, "Lilith," *The Journal of American Folklore* 77 (1964) 295-314.

Paz Saar, Ortal, "Mesopotamian Double-Jar Burials and Incantation Bowls," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 4:138 (2018) 863-873.

Paz Saar, Ortal, "Who Wrote the Babylonian Incantation Bowls?" Forthcoming.

Paz Saar, Ortal, "Review of Shaul Shaked, James Nathan Ford and Siam Bhayro, With contributions from Matthew Morgenstern and Naama Vilozny, Aramaic Bowl Spells," *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 110 (2015) 324-338.

Perikhanian, Anahit, *The Book of Thousand Judgments: A Sasanian Law-Book* (NY; Mazda Publishers1997).

Peskowitz, Miriam, *Spinning Fantasies: Rabbis, Gender, and History* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1997).

Puech, Émile, Magical Jug in Babylonian Aramaic, *Semitica et Classica* International Journal of Oriental and Mediterranean Studies 5 (2012) 249-259. (French)

Reiner, Erica, "Astral Magic in Babylonia," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 85 (1995) 1-150.

Rochberg, Francesca, "The Babylonians and the Rational Reasoning in Cuneiform Scribal Scholarship," in J. Cale Johnson (ed.), *In the Wake of the Compendia: Infrastructural Contexts and the Licensing of Empiricism in Ancient and Medieval Mesopotamia* (Berlin De Gruyter 2015).

Rochberg, Francesca, *In the Path of the Moon: Babylonian Celestial Divination and Its Legacy* (eiden Brill 2010).

Rollig, Wolfgang, "Myths about the Netherworld in the Ancient Near East and their Counterparts in the Greek Religion," in S. Ribichini, M. Rocchi, and P. Xella, (eds.), *La Questione Delle Influence Vicino-Orientali Sulla Religione Greca* (Rom 2001) 307-314.

Rosen-Zvi, Ishay, *The Rite That Was Not: Temple, Midrash and Gender in Tractate Sotah*, (Ph.D. Diss. Tel Aviv University 2008) (Hebrew).

Rosen-Zvi, Ishai, "Rereading the Yeṣer in Amoraic Literature," *Tarbiẓ* 77 (2007) 71-107 (Hebrew).

Rosen-Zvi, Ishay, "'Tractate *Kinui*': A Forgotten Tannaitic Debate about Marriage, Freedom of Movement and Sexual Supervision," *JSIA* 5 (2006) 21-48.

Rowlandson, J., *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt: A Sourcebook* (Cambridge University Press 1998).

Schmandt-Besserat, Denise, *When Writing Met Art: From Symbol to Story* (University of Texas Press 2007).

Schwemer, Daniel, "The Ancient Near East," in D. J. Collins (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Magic and Witchcraft in the West from Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge 2015) 17-51.

Schwemer, Daniel, "Magic Rituals: Conceptualization and Performance," in Karen Radner and Eleanor Robson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture* (Oxford University Press 2011) 419-442.

Scurlock, Joann, "Medicine and Healing Magic," in Mark W. Chavalas (ed.), *Women in the Ancient Near East* (Routledge, 2014) 101-143.

Scurlock, JoAnn, *Sourcebook for Ancient Mesopotamian Medicine* (Society of Biblical Literature 2014).

Scurlock, JoAnn, *Magico-Medical Means of Treating Ghost-Induced Illnesses in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Leiden: Brill/Styx 2006).

Scurlock, Joann, "Soul Emplacements in Ancient Mesopotamian Funerary Rituals," in Leda Ciraolo and Jonathan Seidel (eds.), *Magic and Divination in the Ancient World* (Leiden Brill 2002) 1-5.

Scurlock, JoAnn, "Magical Uses of Ancient Mesopotamian Festivals of the Dead," in Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki (eds.), *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* (Leiden Brill 2001) 93-107.

Scurlock Joann, "Baby-Snatching Demons, Restless Souls and the Dangers of Childbirth: Magico-Medical Means of Dealing with Some of the Perils of Motherhood in Ancient Mesopotamia," *Incognita* 2 (1991) 137-185.

Segal, J. B., *Catalogue of the Aramaic and Mandaic Incantation Bowls in the British Museum* (British Museum, 2000).

Seidel, Jonathan Lee, *Studies in Ancient Jewish Magic* (Ph.D. Diss. University of California at Berkeley, 1996).

Seidel, Jonathan, "'Release Us and We Will Release You': Rabbinic Encounters with Witches and Witchcraft," *Journal of the Association of Graduates in Near Eastern Studies. Berkeley* 3 (1992) 45–61.

Shaked, Shaul, "Rabbis in Incantation Bowls," in Markham J. Geller (ed.), *The Archaeology and Material Culture of the Babylonian Talmud* (Leiden Brill 2015) 97-120.

Shaked, Shaul, James Nathan Ford, and Siam Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells: Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls* (Magical and Religious Literature of Late Antiquity 1; Brill, 2013).
Shaked, Shaul, "Transmission and Transformation of Spells: The Case of the Jewish Babylonian Aramaic bowls," in Gideon Bohak, Yuval Harari, Shaul Shaked (eds.), *Continuity and Innovation in the Magical Tradition* (Leiden Brill 2011) 187-217.

Shaked, Shaul, "No Talking During a Meal: Zoroastrian Themes in the Babylonian Talmud," in Carol Bakhos and Rahim Shayegan (eds.), *The Talmud in its Iranian Context* (Tübingen Mohr Siebeck 2010) 161-176.

Shaked, Shaul, "Form and Purpose in Aramaic Spells: Some Jewish Themes [the Poetics of Magic Texts]," in S. Shaked (ed.), *Officina Magica, Essays on the Practice of Magic in Antiquity* (Leiden Brill 2005) 1–30.

Shaked, Shaul, "Magic Bowls and Incantation Texts: How to Get Rid of Demons and Pests," *Quadmoniot* 129 (2005) 2-13 (Hebrew).

Shaked, Shaul, "The Poetics of Spells: Language and Structure in Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity," in T. Abusch and K. Van der Toorn (eds.), *Mesopotamian Magic, Textual, Histroical and Interpretative Perspectives* (Siyx publications 1999) 173-195.

Shaked, Shaul, "Epigraphica Judaeo-Iranica," in S. Morag et al. (eds.), *Studies in Judaism and Islam presented to Shelomo Dov Goitein* (Jerusalem 1981) 65-82.

Shaked, Shaul., "Some Legal and Administrative Terms of the Sasanian Period," *Monumentum* 5 (1975) 213-225.

Sheridan J.A.,"Not at a Loss for Words: The Economic Power of Literate Women in Late Antique Egypt," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 128 (1998) 189-203.

Smelik, Klaas, "An Aramaic Incantation Bowl in the Allard Pierson Museum," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 35(1978) 174-177.

Stökl, Jonathan, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East: A Philological and Sociological Comparison* (Leiden Brill 2012).

Stol, Marten, *Women in the Ancient Near East* (Berlin De Gruyter 2016).

Swartz, Michael D., "The Aesthetics of Blessing and Cursing: Literary and Iconographic Dimensions of Hebrew and Aramaic Blessing and Curse Texts," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 5 (2005) 187-211.

Titiev, Mischa A., "Fresh Approach to the Problem of Magic and Religion," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 16 (1960) 292-298.

Thompson, R. Campbell, *The Devils and Evil Spirits of Babylonia* (London: Luzac and co. 1904).

Trachtenberg, Joshua, *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion* (University of Pennsylvania press 2003).
Van Deun, Peter, "The Poetical Writings of the Empress Eudocia: An Evaluation," in J. den Boeft and A. Hilhorst (eds.), *Early Christian Poetry* (Leiden Brill 1993) 273-282.

Veldhuis, Niek, "Divination: Theory and Use," in Ann K. Guinan et al. (eds.), *If a Man Builds a Joyful House: Assyriological Studies in Honor of Erle Verdun Leichty* (Leiden Brill 2006) 487-497.

Valler, Shulamit, *Women in Jewish Society in the Talmudic Period* (Hakibbutz Hameuchad 2002) (Hebrew).

Vilozny, Naama, "The Art of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls," in Shaul Shaked, James Nathan Ford and Siam Bhayro (eds.), *Aramaic Bowl Spells: Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls* (Leiden Brill 2013) 29-37.

Vilozny, Naama, *Figure and Image in Magic and Popular Art: Between Babylonia and Palestine, during the Roman and Byzantine periods* (Ph.D. Diss. Hebrew University of Jerusalem 2010) (Hebrew).

Waller, Daniel James, "Echo and the Historiola: Theorizing the Narrative Incantation," *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 16 (2015) 263-280.

Watts, Edward J., *Hypatia: The Life and Legend of an Ancient Philosopher* (Oxford University Press 2017).

Wiggermann, F.A.M., "Lamastu, daughter of Anu: A Profile," in Marten Stol (ed.), *Birth in Babylonia and the Bible: Its Mediterranean Setting* (Groningen 2000) 217-253.

Wiggermann, F. A. M., *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits the Ritual Texts* (Siyx publications Groningen 1992) 46-53.

Wilburn, Andrew. T., *Materia Magica: The Archaeology of Magic in Roman Egypt, Cyprus, and Spain* (The University of Michigan; Press Ann Arbor 2012).

Witherington, B., "The Anti-Feminist Tendencies of the 'Western' Text in Acts," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 103 (1984) 82-84.

Yamauchi, Edwin M., "Magic Bowls," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 85 (1965) 511-523.

List of tables

Lists of Charts

Lists of incantation bowls images

Image	incantation	museum	page
1	Montgomery 14 (CBS 16917)	The Penn Museum	82
2	Montgomery 20 (CBS 16023)	The Penn Museum	84
3	Montgomery 8 (CBS 9013)	The Penn Museum	85
4	Montgomery 17 (CBS 2922) - **NFP 1**	The Penn Museum	107
5	CBS 16020 – **NFP 10**	The Penn Museum	118
6	JBA 56 (MS 1928/8) – **NFP 4**	Martin Schøyen Collection	119
7	BM 135563 – **NFP 2**	The Museum für Islamische Kunst.	123
8	JNL Heb. 4, 6079 (Naveh and Shaked(12a)	The National Library of Israel.	134
9	Gorea 2003, B2 – **NFP 5**	The Musée Champollion - les écritures du monde.	136