

II. AIMS OF THE STUDY AND THE MATERIAL USED

II.1. AIMS OF THE STUDY

The study presented here is being written against the background of the East Aramaic studies surveyed in the previous chapter. It has the following aims:

This study endeavours to present an analysis of the salient traits in the phonology and morphology of the language used in the Aramaic magic bowl texts. Generally speaking, less attention is paid to syntactic features, especially due to the stereotyped character of these texts. Yet, the syntactic features which may be useful in comparisons with other dialects are treated in connection with morphological features. No attempt is made to provide a complete description of all the linguistic traits of the bowl texts, but attention is devoted to the traits which render the Aramaic of the bowl incantations peculiar. The definition 'Aramaic magic bowl texts' refers to texts written in Hebrew square characters, not in Syriac or Mandaic characters. Thus I limit myself to Aramaic texts presumed to be Jewish (JA).

This study also attempts to draw a comparison between the language of these bowls and other relevant Aramaic dialects. On the one hand, the salient linguistic features of the bowl texts are compared with Mandaic, Syriac, and BJA, and on the other with Official and Middle Aramaic dialects, especially with the language of TO. The study focuses on the relation of the language of the bowl texts to other dialects of BJA, such as standard BTA, Geonic Aramaic, and the Nedarim type of Aramaic. Lastly, the West Aramaic dialects are taken into account, as well.

II.2. MATERIAL USED IN THE STUDY

The study is based on all the published Aramaic texts, except for some early publications of a most uncertain character,¹ even though some of them were published with a facsimile. Excluded are bowls published by Rodwell, Schwab,² Hyvernat, Markaug, Wohlstein, and Stübe.³ Moreover, I could not obtain the texts published by Jeruzalmi.⁴ Nevertheless, these texts have also been read through for this study,

¹ Cf. Naveh & Shaked 1985: 19; Isbell 1975: 1-2; Montgomery 1913: 16ff.

² Except those already published by Ellis.

³ References to these publications are given in Naveh & Shaked 1985: 19 and 243ff.

⁴ The texts published by Jeruzalmi are included in his unpublished (?) 1963 Ph.D. diss., entitled 'Les coupes magiques araméennes de Mésopotamie.' [l'Université de Paris]. See Naveh & Shaked 1985: 21, 253; Isbell 1975: 198; Boyarin 1978: 152, n. 60. According to

excluding those published by Markaug,⁵ but the fact that I have not been able to check the reading is mentioned when these texts are referred to, and the information based on these texts is treated with caution. The same goes for many texts published only tentatively by Gordon, without photographs or facsimiles.⁶

Since there are considerable differences in quality between different publications, the study is *principally* based on the publications the reading of which may be checked with the aid of either a *photograph* or *facsimile*. The texts whose reading may be controlled with the aid of a photograph are, so to say, the primary material of this study, whereas the texts which may be read with the aid of a facsimile are taken into account as material of somewhat lesser importance, and this is generally pointed out when the text under discussion cannot be checked from a photograph. If the texts of which I have no photograph nor facsimile contain something exceptional or important, they are referred to, always bearing in mind that the reading cannot be properly checked.

Almost all modern publications include the photographs of the texts, or at least proper facsimiles. In addition, I have at my disposal photographs of all the Aramaic bowl texts published by Montgomery (AIT 1-30) and – in addition to the texts published by Gordon which include a photograph – I have been able to check the readings of Go 5 (Ao 1915 Musée du Louvre), Go 6 (Ao 2099 Musée du Louvre) and Go 7 (Ao 2099 Musée du Louvre) with the aid of photographs.⁷

Due to the fact that the reading of some texts may be controlled better than that of some others, examples from the former group of texts seem to be over-represented in this study among the instances which exemplify the dialect of the bowl texts. Therefore, one finds in particular examples from the texts published by Montgomery (AIT), of which I have good photographs at my disposal, as well as from the most recent publications, such as the excellent books by Naveh and Shaked (N&Sh). The reading of the former may also be re-checked with the aid of facsimiles and, importantly, with the invaluable emendations by Epstein (1921).

My principal aim is to base this study on material that is as reliable as possible. Thus, no attempt is made to include in the study all the texts which have been published, if the quality of the publication is unsatisfactory. Besides, we cannot for quite a while (if ever) include in any study the whole corpus of the bowl texts: there are plenty of unpublished bowl texts, the publication of which will definitely widen our knowledge of the Aramaic represented in these incantations. Yet I am

Isbell, the study is from the year 1964, and according to Boyarin, from the year 1974. The texts are included in Isbell 1975 (texts 58 = Ellis 3; 59 = Ellis 5; 63-70).

⁵ For Markaug, cf. Montgomery 1913: 19. The texts published by Jeruzalmi are used in accordance with the copies in Isbell 1975.

⁶ Gordon 1941: 339-357.

⁷ Gordon 1941: 123-128.

convinced that the reliable material at our disposal is extensive enough to reveal most of the essential linguistic features of the Aramaic of the bowl texts.

In this study, I have normally translated the instances I give. Even though my translations are generally based on the translations in the original publications, I often need to modify them, since I typically wish to highlight certain linguistic phenomena observable in the text.

This study is *principally* based on the following bowl texts. Included are all the texts I have been able to check with the aid of either photographs or proper facsimiles:

- AB A-F** = Aaron bowls A-F, published by M. J. Geller (Geller 1986)
- AIT 1-30** = Aramaic incantation texts, published by James Montgomery (Montgomery 1913)
- B1-2** = Bowls published by Christa Müller-Kessler (Müller-Kessler 1994)
- BOR** = An Aramaic incantation bowl from Borsippa, published by Tapani Harviainen (Harviainen 1981)
- Boris 1-4** = Bowls published by A. Ja. Borisov (Borisov 1969)
- DMB** = The De Menil bowl, published by Charles Isbell (Isbell 1976)
- Ellis 1, 3, 5** = Bowls published by Thomas Ellis (Ellis 1853)
- F 1-5** = Five Aramaic incantation bowls from Tell Baruda (Choche), published by Fulvio Franco (Franco 1979)
- GE A-D** = Four Aramaic incantation bowls, published by M. J. Geller (Geller 1980)
- Go 1-10** = Aramaic incantation bowls, published by Cyrus Gordon (Gordon 1941)
- Go A-F** = Aramaic magical bowls in the Istanbul and Baghdad Museums, published by Cyrus Gordon (Gordon 1934a)
- Go G** = An Aramaic exorcism, published by Cyrus Gordon (Gordon 1934b)
- Go H-L** = Aramaic magical bowls, published by Cyrus Gordon (Gordon 1937)
- HUN** = A bowl published by Erica Hunter (Hunter 1996)
- IMB** = Iraq Museum bowl, published by Cyrus Gordon (Gordon 1978)
- J** = A bowl published by J. Oelsner (Oelsner 1989).
(A photograph is included in Müller-Kessler 1994)
- JMLB** = Jewish Museum, London, bowl, published by M. J. Geller (Geller 1986)
- KHAB** = An Aramaic incantation bowl from Khafaje, published by E. M. Cook (Cook 1992)

- MB I-II** = Moriah bowls I-II, published by Cyrus Gordon (Gordon 1984)
- MBN** = A unique magic bowl from Nippur, published by S. A. Kaufman (Kaufman 1973)
- McCu A-B** = Jewish incantation bowls in the Royal Ontario Museum, published by W. S. McCullough (McCullough 1967)
- N&Sh** = Bowls published by Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked in *Amulets and Magic Bowls* and in *Magic Spells and Formulae* (Naveh & Shaked 1985 and 1993)
- Ober. I-II** = Bowls published by Julian Obermann (Obermann 1940)
- OIT** = A bowl from the Chicago Oriental Museum (text N-IV), published by Charles Isbell (Isbell 1976)
- PB** = Pearson bowl, published by M. J. Geller (Geller 1986)
- SB** = Sotheby's bowl, published by M. J. Geller (Geller 1997)
- TB** = An Aramaic bowl from Teheran, published by Cyrus Gordon (Gordon 1951)
- WB** = An Aramaic bowl in the possession of Mrs. M. C. Wiseman, published by M. J. Geller (Geller 1976)
- Yam** = A bowl published by E. Yamauchi (Yamauchi 1965)
- ZRL** = Zion Research Library bowl, published by Cyrus Gordon (Gordon 1978)