Magie, mystika a liturgie: židovská tradice v amuletech pozdní antiky

Magic, Mysticism and Liturgy: Jewish Tradition in Amulets of Late Antiquity

Marek Vinklát

This dissertation thesis focuses on a phenomenon of Aramaic magic bowl, or Aramaic incantation bowls, amulets originating in Mesopotamia of Late Antiquity. It is a first Czech monograph on this topic and also a bold attempt to translate texts of these already published bowls to the Czech language. After the introduction, which elucidates the means of selection and translation of sixteen presented bowls, author discusses the history of research on these peculiar amulets. Many past and modern scholars are presented here with their theories, attitudes and publications. A special part of this second chapter is dedicated to the problem of black antiquities market and illegal trade with Aramaic magic bowls.

The first chapter is dealing with a possible connection of bowls and Hekhalot literature, which is also briefly introduced and described. Author analyzes and translates five Aramaic magic bowls and compares their preciously unique content with relevant macroforms of Hekhalot literature. As was stated by another scholars, the Aramaic magic bowls were written by people, who knew the Hekhalot literature and, possibly, were cherishing it. Next topic speaks about the influence of synagogue liturgy on the incantation of the bowls. It was found, the inspiration was drew especially from evening service and from the night recitation of Shema. Two bowls could be considered as the oldest manuscripts of Mishnah, containing Zevahim 5,3-4 which is read in the morning service. The third chapter describes the utilisation of the Bible in Jewish magic and focuses on three Aramaic magic bowls. One of them is probably made according to mezuzah. Two other bowls incorporate the verses from Targum Onkelos and also Targum Jonathan. These bowls could be also considered as the oldest extant manuscripts of Targum literate. The last chapter of analyses and translations focuses on legendary character of Lilith and her three adversaries, the angels Senoy, Sansenoy and Senmangeloph. The story of their origins attested in Alphabet of ben Sirach is introduced to the reader and also compared with one Aramaic magic bowl containing a very similar story. Another part of the chapter deals with historical figures of the rabbis Joshua bar Perahia and Hanina ben Dosa, which are present in many Aramaic magic bowls in the role of exorcists. The legends about Lilith, the angels and also about holy exorcists were merged in the passage of time into one incantation, which is illustrated on two Hebrew amulets from Jewish Museum in Prague.

The conclusion of the dissertation thesis answers the questions posed in the introduction. To study the Aramaic magic bowls is very important, because these artefacts can hold many interesting and vital information for Jewish and Biblical studies. The authors of the bowls had to be very skilled in liturgy, Targums and in rabbinic and Hekhalot literature. No doubt they belonged to the middle educated class, and were possibly scribes, synagogue official, meturgemans and also physicians, as proves an appendix about medicine terminology in the Aramaic magic bowls presented also in the final chapter. Last part of the work itself is briefly describing chosen scientific theories about the relation of religion and magic. These theories are applied on the subject of our Aramaic incantation bowls and thus verified.