

**National Research University Higher School of Economics**

*as a manuscript*

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**SYRIAC LOVE MAGIC: CLASSIFICATION OF TEXTS AND  
INVESTIGATION OF THEIR CONTEXTS**

Dissertation Summary  
for the purpose of obtaining  
academic degree Doctor of Philosophy in Philology and Linguistics

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Moscow 2023

The results of this research were presented in **four** articles. Two of them have been published in *Scrinium* (List C of eligible journals developed by HSE University, Q1/Q2 in Scopus), two others – in *Aramaic Studies* (List A of eligible journals developed by HSE University, Q3). In three of the articles the author of the dissertation is the main and first author. One article accepted for publication in *Aramaic Studies* is single-authored.

1. Cherkashina, A. Syriac Love Charms. Part I. The Recipe-type / A. Cherkashina, A. Lyavdansky // *Scrinium*. – 2021. – 17. – P. 68–91 (List C, Scopus Q1).
2. Cherkashina, A. Syriac Love Charms. Part II. The Prayer-type / A. Cherkashina, A. Lyavdansky // *Scrinium*. – 2022. – 18. – P. 22–48 (List C, Scopus Q1).
3. Cherkashina, A. “‘Binding of a Husband’: A Syriac Erotic Binding Spell and Its Context / A. Cherkashina, N. Kuzin // *Aramaic Studies*. – 2022. – 20/2. – P. 154–195 (List A, Scopus Q3, WoS).
4. Cherkashina, A. ‘As Far as the East Is from the West, and the North Is from the South’: Syriac Separation Spells and Their Contexts / A. Cherkashina // *Aramaic Studies*. – forthcoming. – 21/1 (List A, Scopus Q3, WoS).

#### **Other publications of the author of the dissertation related to the topic**

1. Cherkashina, A. Solomon and the Demons in the Charms of Syriac Christians / A. Cherkashina // *Christian Orient*. – 2021. – 9 (XV). – P. 141–170.
2. Cherkashina, A. Syriac Spells for a Mill and Their Historical Context / A. Cherkashina, D. Cherkashin, O.-P. Saar // *Scrinium*. – 2022. – 18. – P. 49–84 (List C, Scopus Q1).
3. Cherkashina, A. Syriac version of St Sisinnius’ legend / A. Cherkashina, A. Lyavdansky // *St Sisinnius' legend in folklore and handwriting tradition of the Near East* / ed. A. L. Toporkov. – Moscow, 2017. – P. 203–241.
4. Cherkashina, A. The Catalogue of the Magical Ritual Prescriptions of Syrian Christians / A. Cherkashina, D. Rashid // *Tirosh*. – 2021. – 21. – P. 199–234.

#### **Approbation of the results of the research**

The preliminary results of the research were presented in the following papers and lectures:

1. A. Cherkashina, “Syriac separation spells” [«Сирийские отворотные заговоры»] (a paper read in the State Hermitage Museum, international conference “Christian Orient: interaction with other cultures”, 17.09.2021).

2. A. Cherkashina, “Syriac love charms” (a lecture read in HSE University, at the seminar “Traditions of Magic in the Near East and Caucasus”).

### **General description**

This study focusses on Syriac magical practices dealing with love, hate and social appreciation. The object of the study is Syriac magical codices and amulets, dated from the 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> cc. and produced by Syriac Christians mainly in Kurdistan and Iranian Azerbaijan. The study analyses 19 texts, most of which have been published for the first time. In addition to bringing new material to light, a classification of the texts is provided which is based on their form and content. Finally, the texts are considered within the larger context of magical traditions of the Near East and the Mediterranean: Greek, Coptic, Jewish, Mesopotamian, and Mandaic<sup>1</sup>.

In this thesis *Syriac magic*<sup>2</sup> and *Syriac magical tradition* is understood as magical practices attested in manuscripts (amulets and codices) and texts inscribed on such artefacts as metal and leather amulets and magic bowls in Syriac. The category of *Syriac love magic* includes magical texts aiming to instill love or hate, and also those for social appreciation. All these intend to affect their spell targets on a psychological and sometimes also physical level. They can thus be classified as aggressive magical practices. Until recently the very existence of this kind of magic among Syriac Christians has not been acknowledged, even though some of the texts which belong to the scope of the present study were published more than a hundred years ago. In some cases, they were misinterpreted, in others – simply neglected by scholars. As a result, even the most recent works characterize Syriac magic as apotropaic, leaving the presence of aggressive magical practices unmentioned. Taking the existence of aggressive magic among Syriac Christians into account leads to a more complete understanding of the phenomenon of Syriac magic as a part of Syriac intellectual culture and daily life.

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<sup>1</sup> This list of magical traditions is by no means exhaustive, and further comprehensive studies of this subject aiming to establish connections between Syriac magic and other magical traditions of the region should include also Arabic, Ethiopian, Kurdish, Armenian, and other evidence.

<sup>2</sup> In what follows I use the term ‘magic’ as a convenient heuristic device and intend to avoid engaging in the long-term discussion about the exact definition of this type of ritual activity. For a recent review of opinions on this issue see [Pearson 2022]. Further elaborations on my understanding of what texts can be treated as related to love magic and specifically to spells for attraction (the recipe type and the prayer type) and spells for separation can be found in the respective parts of this thesis.

The thesis addresses the following research questions: What texts can be attributed to Syriac love magic? How can they be subdivided within this category? What place in the Syriac magical tradition do they occupy? What features and elements attested in these can be found in other magical traditions of the Near East and the Mediterranean?

### **State of the field**

Two western reports about magical practices among Syriac Christians belong to an American and a British missionary: Justin Perkins (1843) and George Percy Bagder (1852). The latter wrote a treatise of the life and popular beliefs of Syriac Christians where he states:

As might be expected in a people among whom education has been neglected for so many ages, and who cannot consequently be supposed to possess any deep or adequate sense of the high and holy truths which they profess, the Nestorians entertain many superstitions respecting the powers of evil, and the value of certain talismans to allay or counteract them. Thus they have charms against the evil eye, the poison of reptiles and plants, the rot and other diseases in sheep, the tyranny of rulers and the designs of wicked men, &c, most of which adverse influences are believed to be destroyed by certain passages of Holy Writ which are profanely used to this end [...] I regret to state that the clergy are generally the authors of these absurd and profane effusions.

The two reports contain important information on how the Syriac magical tradition functioned: magic texts were produced by the clergy and sold as amulets to the villagers of the neighbouring area<sup>3</sup>. Another value of Bagder's work is that it contains English translations of five texts taken from a Syriac magic handbook in his possession<sup>4</sup>. In her study devoted to the state of the field, including its history and remaining desiderata, Abigail Pearson presents a few other accounts which bear a similar attitude towards the Syriac literature as a whole. She reasonably connects this negative attitude towards Syriac magic with the poor condition in which the state of the field has remained until recently [Pearson 2022]. It is widely recognized that Syriac magic, especially as attested in modern manuscripts, has been generally neglected both by scholars who investigate Syriac literature and by those who work with Jewish, Muslim and Ancient Mesopotamian

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<sup>3</sup> [Bagder 1852: 240]. A similar report was made a few years before Bagder's book by an American missionary Justin Perkins. It tells about a Nestorian priest who produced an amulet for a cow of a Muslim client [Perkins 1843: 456].

<sup>4</sup> [Bagder 1852: 238–240]. Three of these texts are discussed in the following parts of this thesis.

magical traditions. Until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>5</sup>, only a couple of studies on Syriac magic were published. These can be divided into studies of the early Syriac texts written on magic bowls of Late Antiquity and analyses of modern Syriac amulets and codices created in the 18<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The most prominent study of the first group of sources before 1946 is that of James Montgomery<sup>6</sup> who edited seven Syriac magic bowls within his investigation of incantations in other Aramaic languages. In the field of late Syriac magical texts an edition of three codices prepared by Hermann Gollancz<sup>7</sup> was truly groundbreaking. A few years before that, in 1908, a French translation of more than a dozen individual texts from a Syriac magical codex was prepared by an outstanding Armenologist, Frédéric Macler [Macler 1908]. The full text of one amulet was edited by Willis H. Hazard [Hazard 1892]. Smaller editions of single texts were made by Isaac H. Hall and F. Nau<sup>8</sup>. It would be no exaggeration to state that before the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century most of the publications on Syriac magic were merely editions of individual texts. After 1946, when studies of magic began to attract more scholarly attention, the focus was directed more towards the Syriac bowls and amulets of Late Antiquity<sup>9</sup>, rather than on late Syriac magical texts. Still, in the latter field there are prominent names, such as Erica Hunter. She introduced new texts into scientific circulation [Hunter 1992, 1993, 1999] and analysed them, together with previously published material, to gain insight into their genres [Hunter 1990], the role of saints in Syriac magic [Hunter 1987] and the usage of amulets among Syriac Christians [Hunter 2009]. The observation can be made that since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the two main textual corpora attesting to the Syriac magical tradition — the first consisting of magic bowls and amulets of Late Antiquity and the second of amulets and handbooks dating to the 18<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries — have been studied separately. Scholars examining one of these corpora rarely included sources

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<sup>5</sup> Dividing the time span from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century until 2022 into two periods — before 1945 and from 1946 until present time — I follow Pearson’s chronological periodization, which is based upon the attitude towards studies of magic in the academic community, see [Pearson 2022: 13].

<sup>6</sup> [Montgomery 1913]. Other publications of this period include: [Ellis 1853; Montgomery 1912, 1918; Lidzbarski 1916; Allotte de La Fuÿe 1924].

<sup>7</sup> [Gollancz 1912]. The book continues Gollancz’s research from his intermediary results which were presented in his paper in Paris in 1897 [Gollancz 1898].

<sup>8</sup> [Hall 1892, 1893; Nau 1916, 1918].

<sup>9</sup> The most prominent works here are publications of Syriac bowls made by Hamilton and, more recently, Moriggi, see [Hamilton 1971; Moriggi 2014]. Syriac amulets of Late Antiquity were published by J. Naveh and S. Shaked [Naveh 1985, 1997], and P. Gignoux [Gignoux 1987]. For further references see [Pearson 2022: 20–24; Moriggi 2014: 213–220].

belonging to the other one<sup>10</sup>. During the last decade a few valuable studies have been published which help to bridge the gap between these two corpora. They do this either by investigating the common features shared by the two bodies of textual evidence separated by a chronological gap of approximately one thousand years [Abousamra 2022], or by drawing attention to recent findings dated to the Middle Ages [Hunter 2013, 2017; Abousamra 2013; Takahashi 2017; Dickens 2021]. The studies mentioned here illustrate that significant progress has been made in the field of Syriac magic during the last two decades. The recent appearance of an entire volume devoted to this subject with a focus on modern sources already proves this statement [SSMT], though a few smaller but no less important pieces of research published during the last twenty years should not be diminished<sup>11</sup>. The articles that try to establish the wider context of Syriac magical texts seem of particular importance as they enable integrating Syriac magic into the larger spectre of Semitic and non-Semitic magical practices of the Near East and Mediterranean<sup>12</sup>.

### Research topic

Magical practices of Syriac Christians are represented mostly within handbooks (or *codices*) dating from the 18<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> cc. Though to a lesser extent, Syriac magical texts are also found on such media as paper and leather scrolls and magic bowls. The core of these texts originates from the Eastern Syriac communities historically located in South-Eastern Turkey (Hakkari, Van), Western Iran (Iranian Azerbaijan) and Northern Iraq. The number of manuscripts dated from this period is ca. 120 handbooks (*codices*) and amulets (*rotuli*), which contain more than two thousand recipes and incantations. The textual evidence from this period comprises much more diverse material than what survives of the former periods, Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. The modern Syriac manuscripts include recipes designed to heal and protect a person and his family, to master cattle, to assist in beekeeping, etc. Modern Syriac magical *codices* also attest to love magic. This category encompasses texts which seek different goals. Thus, this thesis considers Syriac recipes for love and/or attraction, recipes for separation and impotence, and recipes for

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<sup>10</sup> In this respect the title of the recent ground-breaking volume devoted to the Syriac magic seems relevant [SSMT]. Unfortunately, the choice of the plural form ('traditions') in the title seems to be left without explanation in the volume, but it seems that this title is indicating the similar view on Syriac magic, thus separating it into two (or more) distinct traditions.

<sup>11</sup> For references see the previous footnotes.

<sup>12</sup> [Zellmann-Rohrer 2019; Lyavdansky 2011]. Besides, it is important to acknowledge here some of the earlier works which laid the basis for further comparative investigations of Syriac magic texts, such as [Krämer 1928; Barb 1948; Gaster 1900; Yousif Mirkis 1977–1978].

social appreciation. The thesis presents a comprehensive research of Syriac love magic. It is mostly based on previously unpublished textual evidence. Each new text is provided with a text-critical edition, accompanied with a philological commentary. Then, a classification of the texts is provided. In regard to their aim, all texts are designed either for attraction, or for separation. However, if the form and structure of the texts are considered, almost all Syriac magic texts dealing with love can be attributed either to *the recipe-type* or to *the prayer-type*. One impotence spell attested in three copies is considered separately from both those types because of its originality, though thematically it clearly belongs to Syriac love magic and, more precisely, to the spells for separation.

### **Goals and objectives of the study**

The research pursues **two main goals**. The first is to study Syriac magical practices dealing with love, hate and social appreciation attested in manuscripts from the 18<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> cc. The second goal is to investigate the contexts of these practices within and outside of Syriac magic.

The **first goal** is achieved by 1) publication of new texts related to love magic and reconsideration of the previously published material; 2) study of the texts' structure and content; 3) elaborating the classification of both new and previously published texts. The **second goal** is achieved by 1) establishing the place of Syriac magical practices related to love and hate within Syriac literature and Syriac magic in particular; 2) adducing formulaic parallels and similar magical practices found in texts produced in other magical traditions of the Near East and the Mediterranean.

### **Relevance of the dissertation**

The dissertation is relevant primarily because it is the first study of Syriac love magic. Discovered more than a hundred years ago, Syriac magical practices as attested in the modern manuscripts remain a largely unexplored field. Though the value of the more substantial contributions cannot be understated, most of the studies devoted to the subject are merely editions of individual texts or manuscripts with a scarce commentary. Still the publication of new manuscripts, and especially of previously unknown spells and recipes, remains an acknowledged desideratum in the field of study of Syriac magic. This thesis thus aims to contribute towards meeting this need, bringing to light new texts and elaborating their classification. In addition to this, each article intends to establish the wider context of Syriac magical practices, thus aiming to integrate Syriac magic into

the larger spectre of Semitic and non-Semitic magical traditions of the Near East and the Mediterranean.

### **Originality of the research**

The originality of the research is based on the following features:

– The thesis contains a number of previously unpublished magical recipes, which in some cases stem from completely unstudied manuscripts. These texts and manuscripts are thus brought into scholarly circulation for the first time. All editions are provided with a critical apparatus, English translation and philological commentary. All manuscripts used for the publication are described, and in some cases reproductions of selected folia have been provided.

– The thesis aims at integrating the previously published but almost unexplored material which stems from G.P. Badger's English translations of three texts which lack their Syriac originals (appendices 1 and 4) and H. Gollancz's Syriac edition which lacks an English translation (appendix 3). Research thus far has almost completely neglected these texts, although each of them represents a rare or unique recipe within the category of Syriac love magic.

– Each text is accompanied by a philological analysis, and an investigation of its context within the Syriac intellectual culture and beyond it. Providing parallels from outside the Syriac magical tradition enables a deeper understanding of the Syriac texts and the magical practices attested in them. Though the subject of this thesis has never been addressed in the nascent field of Syriac magic, similar studies of erotic magical practices from other magical traditions are taken into consideration.

– A classification of Syriac texts related to love and hatred is provided, based on both the new and the previously published material. On one hand, regarding their aim, all the texts can be attributed either to spells for attraction or spells for separation. On the other hand, if the form and structure of the texts are addressed, texts considered in appendices 1, 2, and 4 can be attributed to either the recipe-type or the prayer-type. In appendix 4 it is argued that the latter classification can be useful for classification of Syriac magical texts designed for other aims.



## **Methodological basis**

The methodological basis of the dissertation consists of philological research methods. Most of the texts were discovered in previously unpublished manuscripts. My editions of texts within this thesis involved the implementation of palaeographical and codicological work to identify the manuscripts, to analyse their contents, and to prepare their descriptions. Text-critical editions of the Syriac original are based on one of the extant copies of the recipe. When the possible proto-text is discussed, text-critical methods are implemented. In addition, in the discussion of each text the following aspects are considered: its general interpretation, its stylistic features, and its structure. Philological commentary often includes linguistical analysis of morphology and syntax, as well as etymological analysis of unclear lexemes. Methods of comparative and historical analysis are applied to establish the context of the texts within Syriac literature and beyond. Along with philological methods, based on an integrated toolkit, a historical approach (defining the texts' historical and cultural context) is applied when the texts and the magical practices attested in them are discussed within the broader context of the magical practices of the Near East and the Mediterranean.

## **Theoretical and practical output of the research**

The **theoretical output** of the dissertation consists of the dissemination of new knowledge about the Syriac magical tradition as a whole and Syriac love magic in particular. The research adds to our knowledge of the origins and the development of Syriac magic. The classification of texts as belonging either to the recipe-type or to the prayer-type can be applied in further investigations of texts belonging to the Syriac magical tradition. The **practical output** of the dissertation is determined by the fact that it offers editions and translations of previously unpublished Syriac magical texts and descriptions of previously unexplored manuscripts.

## **Structure of the thesis**

The thesis consists of an introduction followed by four articles designed in the form of appendices. The first two articles investigate Syriac spells for attraction. These are divided into two groups: the recipe-type texts (appendix 1) and the prayer-type texts (appendix 2). The other two articles deal with Syriac spells for separation. Here the distinction is made not only between the recipe-type and the prayer-type texts, both of which are explored in appendix 4, but also between these two and erotic binding spells. The latter group is studied in appendix 3.

## **Appendix 1.** Article: “Syriac Love Charms. Part I. The Recipe-type”

Cherkashina, A. Syriac Love Charms. Part I. The Recipe-type / A. Cherkashina, A. Lyavdansky // *Scrinium*. – 2021. – 17. – P. 68–91.

In this article six Syriac spells for attraction are considered. Four of the six are here published for the first time and the remaining two texts stem from G.P. Badger’s book *The Nestorians and Their Rituals* [Badger 1852], where the author provided translations of six texts without their Syriac original. All six texts investigated in this article can be attributed to *the recipe-type*. Among their primary characteristics is their rarity in Syriac magical codices – all but one of the texts are attested in a single copy. Another prominent trait of this type is that they lack allusions to and citations from the Bible, and contain no mentions of any of the hypostases of the Trinity, or Christian saints, etc. In other words, these texts lack most of the explicit indicators of circulation in the Christian milieu which are easy to detect in the majority of Syriac magical recipes. Texts of the recipe-type often contain ritual instructions or what is called *an allusion* to it, and *voces magicae*. My assumption is that texts of this type reflect ancient magical practices of pre-Christian origin, which are credibly attested in the texts belonging to other magical traditions of the Near East and the Mediterranean. Each text considered in this article is placed into the wider context of the neighboring magical practices by adducing parallels from relevant magical texts.

## **Appendix 2.** Article: “Syriac Love Charms. Part II. The Prayer-type”

Cherkashina, A. Syriac Love Charms. Part II. The Prayer-type / A. Cherkashina, A. Lyavdansky // *Scrinium*. – 2022. – 18. – P. 22–48.

This article edits four more Syriac spells for attraction, but of another kind — what is called *the prayer-type*. First, it is worth noting that spells of this type are much better attested in the manuscripts than those of the recipe-type. The special features of this type of Syriac spells for attraction are addressed and compared with those of the recipe-type texts, discussed in the first article. Then, both the differences and the similarities between the two types of Syriac love spells are addressed. There are a few common features which unite the texts of the prayer-type: 1) common structure resembling that of a prayer, 2) invocations of Jesus Christ and Christian saints, 3) allusions to the Bible. Among the similarities between the texts belonging to the two different types (*the recipe-type* and *the prayer-type*) are: 1) common aim (to instill love), 2) formulaic parallels, 3) shared conceptual metaphors (for instance, LOVE IS FIRE and LOVE IS TORTURE). The differences

between the two types are also discussed in appendix 4 in connection with separation spells.

**Appendix 3.** Article: “‘Binding of a Husband’: A Syriac Erotic Binding Spell and Its Context”

Cherkashina, A. ‘Binding of a Husband’: A Syriac Erotic Binding Spell and Its Context / A. Cherkashina, N. Kuzin // *Aramaic Studies*. – 2022. – 20/2. – P. 154–195.

In this article, a text-critical edition of a rare separation spell named ‘Binding of a Husband’ based on three manuscripts is provided, thus previous editions and translations of the text being revised. The article also investigates 1) the aim of the text and its place in the Syriac magical tradition and in the Syriac literature as a whole; 2) possible parallels for ‘Binding of a Husband’ beyond the Syriac intellectual culture. The article contains four sections. In the first section a text-critical edition of a yet unpublished text of this spell according to BL Or 5281 is presented, followed by a synopsis of the three copies. The second section analyses the structure and composition of the spell and offers a line-by-line philological commentary. The third section addresses the genre of Syriac binding spells to which the spell belongs. It also investigates the aim of the spell and its wider context and, for this purpose, discusses three other spells: two more binding spells presumably intended to prevent a wife from having intimate relationships with other men. The third spell, named ‘Protection for Grooms’, is a counter-spell to ‘Binding of a Husband’. Finally, external and often much more ancient sources are addressed, such as Greek and Coptic spells, Aramaic magical texts from Late Antiquity, as well as evidence from the Cairo Geniza, in order to establish the broader context of the spell. Two appendices contain an edition of ‘Binding of a Husband’ according to another yet unpublished source, Harvard University, ms. 160, an edition of ‘Protection for Grooms’, and descriptions of the manuscripts with the photocopies.

**Appendix 4.** Article: “‘As Far as the East Is from the West, and the North Is from the South’: Syriac Separation Spells and Their Contexts”

Cherkashina, A. ‘As Far as the East Is from the West, and the North Is from the South’: Syriac Separation Spells and Their Contexts / A. Cherkashina // *Aramaic Studies*. – forthcoming. – 21/1.

This article addresses five Syriac recipes titled ‘For Hatred’ which belong to the category of separation spells. Four of them are edited for the first time. The fifth recipe is found in *The Nestorians and Their Rituals* and exists only in the English translation provided by G.P. Badger. Based on their supposed proto-text, the five texts can be divided into three individual spells. The separation spells are also compared with Syriac spells for attraction. The comparison concerns the textual level as well as the magical practices for inducing hatred or love. The first section of the article serves as an introduction. The second section contains editions of the five texts, which includes their interpretation, philological commentary, and comparative analysis. Syriac separation spells share a few specific features: 1) the prominent aggressive nature; 2) invocations of evil powers (“Devil”, “mother of the devils”, “head of the demons”); 3) *voces magicae*; 4) ritual instructions; 5) marginal position within the Syriac magical tradition. They share the last three features with spells for attraction which belong to the recipe-type. Noting this, I suggest that separation spells can also be divided into spells of the recipe-type and those of the prayer-type. The latter type is attested only by one spell found in two manuscripts and it has a lot in common with spells for attraction of the prayer-type.

One of the four new texts appears to be very similar to the spell edited by G. P. Badger which lacks a Syriac original. The two versions are compared with each other which sometimes leads us to discussions of the possible Syriac original behind Badger’s translation and about the proto-text of the spell.

The third section of the article addresses the phenomenon of Syriac hate spells in a wider context by providing parallels from Jewish, Coptic, Arabic and Mandaic magical traditions. For instance, the wax-analogy used in one of the spells (“And as wax that is melted and falls down before the fire, let them be destroyed”) is paralleled by the execration formulae inscribed on Sefire steles, dated no later than 740 BC. Other formulae and sequences of those find very close parallels in Arabic separation spells (*tafriq*) attested in manuscripts dated from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards and Mandaic separation spells.

### **Provisions submitted for the defense**

- Syriac magical texts dealing with love, hate and social appreciation can be divided into spells for attraction and spells for separation.
- The textual tradition of Syriac love magic preserves ancient magical practices (or sometimes traces of these) which contain valuable evidence of the historical

development of Syriac magical tradition and its contacts and/or common roots with other magical traditions of the region.

– Based on formal criteria all Syriac spells for attraction can be divided into two types: the recipe-type and the prayer-type.

– Syriac magical recipes for separation bear a number of specific features which they share with the spells for attraction. They can similarly be divided into spells of the recipe-type and those of the prayer-type.

– One of the spells considered in this research ('Binding of a Husband') is exceptional: though it corresponds with the separation spells of a prayer-type, this text bears a number of specific features and can be better compared to erotic binding spells widely attested in the magical traditions of the Near East and the Mediterranean.

– Syriac separation spells of both types share a number of specific features which make them unique among the Syriac magical texts.

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