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This book provides a rich panoply of illuminating discussions of Mesopotamian magic in its many facets, resulting from a workshop held at the University of Würzburg. The introduction to the volume provides brief summaries of all the contributions, which does not entirely manage to convey the innovative thinking and importance of many of the contributions in this volume. Although all of the contributions offer original insights into issues related to magic and magical texts, certain themes stand out which will fundamentally influence all future research in this area. Eckart Frahm's discussion of the Exorcist's Manual (KAR 44)¹ and Ulrike Steinert's² lengthy description of the Assyrian Medical Catalogue, both deal with the crucial question of text canonicity in Mesopotamian technical literatures (in this case magic and medicine), which is a topic usually handled in reference to biblical scholarship. Andrew George provides a convincing argument for reading the Sumerian name of the demon Lamaštu as Kamadme,³ although any etymology for this name eludes us. Strahil Panayotov's⁴ treatment of tablets containing vestiges of botanical substances inserted into the clay opens up new possibilities for investigating *materia medica* residues with laboratory testing, to identify medical plants with other criteria other than 19th century comparative philology. Troels Pank Arbøll⁵ comes to similar conclusions about the nature of *maškadu* disease as does Barbara Böck⁶ in

¹ "The Exorcist's Manual: Structure, Language, *Sitz im Leben*" (pp. 9–47).

² "Catalogues, Texts, and Specialists: Some Thoughts on the Assur Medical Catalogue and Mesopotamian Healing Professions" (pp. 48–132). See now her later thoughts on the Assur Medical Catalogue in the introduction to the volume of the BabMed ERC project publishing this important text, in U. Steinert (ed.), *Assyrian and Babylonian Scholarly Text Catalogues. Medicine, Magic and Divination* (Berlin, 2018), 7–24.

³ "Kamadme, the Sumerian Counterpart of the Demon Lamaštu", pp. 150–157.

⁴ "Magico-medical Plants and Incantations on Assyrian House Amulets", pp. 192–222.

⁵ "Tracing Mesopotamian Medical Knowledge: A Study of *maškadu* and Related Illnesses", pp. 261–284.

⁶ See below.

her contribution (p. 256), namely as a general pathology affecting the muscles and skeleton of the lower parts of the human body; Arbøll manages to avoid the pitfalls of retrospective diagnosis which is so prevalent in secondary literature.

The remarkable contribution by Frans Wiggermann,⁷ explaining the well-known Göttertypentext as a guide to a three-dimensional tableau, reminds us of the tendency towards monotheism which was not replicated in the demonic realm; fewer gods made room for a wider scope of activities for both good and bad demons. This point of view raises questions which are not specifically addressed elsewhere in the volume, regarding possible changing attitudes toward gods and demons and their respective roles in human society. The somewhat surprising scenario in Wiggermann's imagined tableau depicting the cosmic world (i. e. order vs. chaos) is the complete absence of the major gods Enlil, Anu, Ištar, Šamaš, Šin, and Adad; four other chief gods (Ea, Dingirmah, Gula, and Ereškigal) are only represented by representative images (pp. 367–368). The central theme revolves around opposition between various forces of good and evil, as described in Wiggermann's colourful prose (pp. 361–362):

Ninurta and Tišpak represent order and the rule of law, Enkimdu and Ensimah hard work and where it gets you, while Damu, supervised by his mother Gula, postpones the domination of Death by nursing the non-lethally ill back to health. Emotional emanations of the struggle for life keep watch at the gates to scare off intruders from beyond, the unruly twins “Struggle” and “Strife”, the winged female spirit Niziqtu, “Grief,” and Himtu “Zeal”. This protected but not uniformly pleasant agricultural domain is a representation of the ordered oecumene at the center of the universe, the opposite of the lawless periphery where the likes of Anzû and Bašmu once hatched their rebellious plans.

In contrast to the picturesque image so clearly described by Wiggermann, other contributions to this volume present a very different view of the cosmos, in which magical good and evil are not so clearly demarcated. Already in Old Babylonian anti-witchcraft incantations from the second millennium BCE, we are told by Avigail Mertens-Wagschal⁸ that aggressive imagery of the lion and wolf were applied to either the client or behexing adversary, alerting us to the idea of a level playing field between good and bad magical powers. Enrique Jiménez⁹ argues along similar lines, that

the imagery of *šāru* “wind” acts either as an instrument of harm or alternatively as a means of removing evil and disease from human clients,¹⁰ showing that the same magical forces as well as imagery can be applied to both good and evil, or aggressively applied by evil or against evil.

The alarm lights, however, begin to flash within the contribution of T. Abusch,¹¹ who describes within well-known Maqlû incantations a first-person address to the adversarial witch; one passage reads (pp. 226–227):

ina kibišiki rābiši ušeššeb eṭem ridāti harrānki ušašbat

I settle the Rābišu-demon in your tracks, I made the pursuing ghost seize your path.

The meaning of the passage is perfectly clear, that the speaker / exorcist invokes evil demons and ghosts to counteract the power of the witch, thus harnessing one evil against another evil. This same theme is taken up in great detail by Daniel Schwemer,¹² who refers to figurines of the bewitched victim being consigned to the safekeeping of Lamaštu Daughter of Anu (see p. 176); it is not entirely clear whether this is beneficial or not. Schwemer, however, mounts convincing arguments for Lamaštu being enlisted to accompany witches to the Netherworld, or alternatively that the evil Mimma Lemnu demon has been assigned the role of acting as chthonic gendarme vis-a-vis witches. The underlying problem with this scenario is that generic designations of demons (e. g. *udug* / *utukku*) are usually neutral, requiring a label to determine the nature and function (*hul* / *lemnu* “evil” vs. *sa* / *ṭābu* “good”), while demons such as Lilith, Lamaštu, and Mimma Lemnu are *ipso facto* evil, with no benign roles. Schwemer's reasoned argument is that a demonic evil is employed against another (perhaps even more invidious) evil – witchcraft – but the question remains how this would be justified within any Mesopotamian view of the cosmos. Since there is no apparent proverbial justification of ‘two wrongs make a right’, or that ‘two negatives render a positive’, we need to look elsewhere for the reasoning behind this idea. One possible analogy comes from the natural environment, that elements such as fire and water are potentially both beneficial and harmful, depending upon circumstances. Nevertheless, the more basic question posed by the witch-

⁷ “The Göttertypentext as a Humanistic Mappa Mundi: An Essay”, pp. 351–370.

⁸ “The Lion, the Witch, and the Wolf: Aggressive Magic and Witchcraft in the Old Babylonian Period”, 158–170.

⁹ “Highway to Hell: The Winds as Cosmic Conveyors in Mesopotamian Incantation Texts”, 316–350.

¹⁰ Akkadian *šāru* “wind” does not quite capture the same semantic range of meanings of Sumerian *LÍL*, which corresponds to Latin *spiritus* and Hebrew *rūah*.

¹¹ “Alternative Models for the Development of Some Incantations”, pp. 223–234.

¹² “Evil Helpers: Instrumentalizing Agents of Evil in Anti-witchcraft Rituals”, 173–191.

craft corpus (including Maqlû incantations) is why witchcraft is treated alternatively by two separate genres, one dominated by incantations and rituals, while a second strategy takes the form of anti-witchcraft recipes (e.g. those copied by Franz Köcher in his monumental *Babylonisch-assyrische Medizin*). There appears to be a clear division between magical rituals (requiring the assistance of harmful demons) and recipe-based remedies aimed at the symptoms or effects of witchcraft.¹³

One major problem in dealing with a general question such as ‘sources of evil’ is to determine whether ideas became frozen over time or were subject to change and modification, as knowledge of the physical environment, medicine, and astronomy developed. A case in point is the well-argued case for continuity made by Francesca Rochberg,¹⁴ which traces the fear of lunar eclipses from Mesopotamian sources into Hellenistic, Syriac, and Pahlavi sources, with a remarkable degree of consistency. Rochberg’s argument emphasises the theological questions involved in confronting evil of the eclipse, and relates the Babylonian eclipse myth referring the moon god with the Syriac Atalya-demon who swallows the moon, based on the Akkadian term *attalû* for ‘darkening’ of the moon. On the other hand, no distinction is made in this argument between earlier periods (roughly before 500 BCE), when eclipses were willy-nilly occurrences, and later periods when scholars became fairly adept at predicting when a lunar eclipse might occur. Surely the ability to predict such an event takes the sting from the tail, and makes the eclipse into another celestial happening which can be calculated mathematically, hence losing much of its ominous significance. Although Rochberg correctly refers to reflections of the *šar pûhi* or substitute king ritual in later periods (in Berossos and elsewhere), nothing can compare in latter periods (post 500 BCE) to ways in which the Neo-Assyrian court reacted to an eclipse, with extreme substitute king

measures being well documented in royal correspondence. Although Rochberg is correct to note that theological views of a lunar eclipse persisted, can we nevertheless detect a change of attitude in our sources? An analogous case can be seen in our own times; even after the lunar landscape has been mapped, Jewish liturgy still includes the *qiddush levanah* or ‘sanctification of the moon’, performed on a regular basis, and the lunar eclipse itself could be the subject of a special blessing. A religious response to the event does necessarily indicate that attitudes towards the eclipse remained frozen; as science progressed and the heavens were better understood, an eclipse event would have lost some of its portentous and threatening qualities, at least within the circle of Babylonian scholars. The prospect of evolving religiosity within the context of science remains to be addressed, also in reference to medicine.

The problem of potential changes in attitude can also be applied to the texts discussed by Nils Heeßel¹⁵ and Barbara Böck¹⁶ in this volume. Heeßel prefers to understand the expression ‘hand of a god’ in medical and diagnostic texts and in divination as literal statements, indicating that the cause of a disease or predicted event (usually negative) is the personal involvement of a deity or demon or ghost in human affairs (see his conclusions, p. 147). Böck concurs by arguing that Muššu’u-incantations and rituals (employing massage therapies) were used against diseases mostly caused by the ‘hand of a ghost’ (p. 256). The present reviewer has repeatedly argued that expressions like the ‘hand of god’ or ‘hand of a ghost’ were often used as non-technical designations for disease rather than necessarily indicating personal involvement of a god or demon or ghost. Since these differences in interpretation cannot be easily resolved by relying on internal evidence alone, it may be useful to look at neighbouring medical systems, to see how medicine evolved in relation to theological concepts of divine or demonic influences. We turn to Greek.

The Hippocratic corpus has long been regarded as an innovative model of rational medicine, especially since the treatise on Sacred Disease not only considers archaic (or pre-Hippocratic) magical healing to be the work of quack-salvers, but it specifically rejects the idea of diseases being attributed to personal involvement of gods. This approach

¹³ A similar idea of harnessing demons for useful aims can be found in non-cuneiform literature as well, with one graphic example coming from the Babylonian Talmud (Gittin 67a), which describes Solomon’s decision to capture Ashmedai, King of the Demons. Ashmedai is tasked with advising Solomon about capturing the *shamir*, the worm which can cut through stone, since metal tools were prohibited for use in building the temple. The plan succeeded but at the same time backfired, since Ashmedai managed to remove Solomon from his throne by creating an eclipse, reminiscent of the Babylonian substitute king ritual (*šar pûhi*). Geller (2018), 452, argues that Ashmedai swallowed the moon, as in the tale of the dragon Atalya (also referred to by F. Rochberg in this volume, pp. 299, 309–311); see M. J. Geller, “Ashmedai’s Apocalypse”, in *Bible Israel Kirche, Studien zur jüdisch-christlichen Begegnung, Festschrift für Rainer Kampling*, (Münster, 2018), 447–456.

¹⁴ “*Ina lumun attalû Sîn: On Evil and Lunar Eclipses*”, pp. 287–315.

¹⁵ “Identifying Divine Agency: The Hands of the Gods in Context”, pp. 135–149.

¹⁶ “Reusing Incantations and Making New from Old: On the Formation and Therapeutic Objective of the Muššu’u (“Embrocation”) Compendium,” 237–260. It is unclear why Böck prefers the translation of “embrocation”, which usually refers to a liquid used externally to treat aches and pains; a simple translation of “massage” seems much more appropriate.

is reinforced by the complete lack of magical rituals and incantations within Hippocratic treatises, in contrast to Babylonian and Egyptian medicine. This does not mean that Greek physicians were atheists or less pious than their patients, but that diseases and treatments were attributed by Hippocratics to observed natural phenomena rather than divine causes. At the same time, there existed a parallel medical universe of temple medicine.

While Hippocratic medicine was in the process of development, medical rituals in temples dedicated to Asclepius were widely popular, offering an alternative approach to medicine through incubation and healing priesthoods. As Manfred Horstmanshoff has clearly shown, inscriptions from 4th century BCE Epidaurus cite miraculous surgery performed on patients by the god Asclepius, in reports which were widely believed but medically impossible.¹⁷ Horstmanshoff compared these early reports with the remarkable account of the second century CE Roman orator Aelius Aristides, who, in his work known as *Sacred Tales*, recorded in extensive detail his own experiences at Pergamon's Asclepion, which he frequented. In this later lengthy account, Aelius Aristides rejected the advice of physicians (referring specifically to Hippocratic medicine) in favour of that given by the god Asclepius in dreams. As Horstmanshoff points out, "in the religion of this period there was a tendency to personal piety ... astrology, amulets, witchcraft, werewolves and ghosts received attention widely."¹⁸ Such reports of Asclepius' efficacy influenced no less a physician than Galen, who attributed his own recovery from illness to the god Asclepius, and Galen himself defended belief in Asclepius as rational medicine.¹⁹ The salient point is that even in the advanced medical thinking of Galen, there was no specific rejection of temple medicine or religious piety in relation to medical therapy.

Comparisons with Greco-Roman medicine help provide us with a more nuanced view of Mesopotamia, which shows similar tendencies towards religious and secular views of diagnosis and therapy. On one hand, there is no hint in Akkadian sources of challenging or refuting divine influences on omens, signs and symptoms, or doubting the efficacy of magical rituals. However, there is a growing tendency towards a more highly mechanistic approach to forecasting the future, which includes zodiacal astrology based on mathematical astronomy, the use of compound recipes in medicine, and highly systematic systems of observing medical symptoms and other types of omens. None of this was intended to doubt the presence of gods, but the focus was gradually shifting towards more precise and accurate means of determining future trends and influencing nature, while at the same time accepting that such developments were sanctioned by gods. Of course, society then as now allowed for differing views regarding the extent of either divine or mechanistic impact on the results of observations, calculations, and therapies, which means that the 'hand of a god / ghost' could be interpreted in various ways, either as divine involvement in or a technical term for illness. Galen himself (who can hardly be considered a magician) takes the view that an effective physician should leave the impression that he is Asclepius (Brockmann 2016, 122). With this in mind, the search for the 'sources of evil' in Mesopotamia should reckon with changes in attitudes based on advances in astronomy, mathematics, and medicine, which fundamentally altered the common notion that Mesopotamian thought was hide-bound by its own traditions.

¹⁷ Horstmanshoff (2004), 326 and 330, points out that earliest reports of temple medicine do not refer to the presence of physicians within temple medicine, probably indicating a clear division between medical and temple-based therapies. This contrasts with later periods, in which physicians were present in temples to help interpret the results of incubation dreams. See M. Horstmanshoff, "Asclepius and Temple Medicine in Aelius Aristides' *Sacred Tales*", in *Magic and Rationality in Ancient Near Eastern and Graeco-Roman Medicine*, ed. M. Horstmanshoff and M. Stol (Leiden / Boston, 2004), 325–341.

¹⁸ Ibid. 333. Horstmanshoff points out that divine epiphanies were widely popular in this period, and Aelius Aristides' own treatments based on the god's recommended therapies were public events, see Brockmann 2016, 124.

¹⁹ Cf. C. Brockmann, "A God and Two Humans on Matters of Medicine: Asclepius, Galen, and Aristides", in *In Praise of Asclepius: Aelius Aristides, Selected Prose Hymns*, ed. D.A. Russell, M. Trapp, H.-G. Nesselrath (Tübingen, 2016), 115–127; see p. 121.