

literacy with institutional authority, and van Egmond's point that even when societies have writing at their disposal most affairs continue to be transacted orally, including the transmission of knowledge.

The fact that normal transmission is oral, and committing knowledge to writing may even mark its demise, is elaborated by Piotr Michalowski in "Literacy, Schooling and the Transmission of Knowledge in Early Mesopotamian Culture." Michalowski interrogates the premises of the symposium, starting with the definition of its key term. If, he proposes, "knowledge is essentially another word for culture," then (quoting a formulation offered by scholars in another field) it may be defined as the "nonhereditary memory of the community," to which philology and archaeology can offer at best limited access (p. 39). The written record of even the most literate of ancient cultures is a highly peculiar manifestation of that culture; we err in treating it as representative, either of the culture, or of knowledge, or of its transmission. Indeed scholarship on ancient Mesopotamia may have misread its written record by viewing it through the lenses of invalid assumptions—by, for example, mistaking lexical lists for records of culture and even evidence of cognitive development: "Not only are these lists less salient culturally than many have theorized, they are also not necessarily characteristic of written tradition," since ethnographic research yields examples of oral lists (p. 46). Rather than being containers of Mesopotamian culture, texts produced within the context of instruction in writing represent "impractical decontextualized knowledge," of no use outside the curriculum itself (p. 47). As to Sumerian liturgical texts, another genre considered to convey culture through scribal education, Michalowski asserts that none of them seems to have been written before the time of Samsuiluna, that is, before the revolt of Sumerian cities against Babylonian rule was crushed and their cults were disrupted. In other words, this material was only recorded in writing when normal—oral—transmission ceased and cultic knowledge was in danger of being lost (pp. 48–50). What then can such texts tell us of Sumerian religious practice during the preceding millennium, when it was alive?

In sum, as Michalowski puts it, "the philological project often obliterates this broader context and creates an ontological fantasy in which a textual corpus is a complete, bounded semantic world" (p. 40). What lies outside this imaginary walled garden of literacy is most of the ancient world that we purport to study, starting with its languages of speech. Cuneiformists may never be able to exit the garden altogether, given the objects of our study, but it behooves us to look out over the walls as far as we can. Several essays in this volume offer views to the landscapes beyond.

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*The Witchcraft Series* Maqlû. By TZVI ABUSCH. Writings from the Ancient World, vol. 37. Atlanta: SBL PRESS, 2015. Pp. xiv + 201. \$29.95 (paper).

This volume presents a transcription and translation of *Maqlû*, "Burning," the longest and most important magical ritual against witchcraft from ancient Mesopotamia. The book is a welcome addition to the series *Writings from the Ancient World*.

*Maqlû* was created in the early first millennium BCE. All manuscripts (clay tablets and fragments) of *Maqlû* are from the first millennium BCE. Though texts come from sites in both northern and southern Mesopotamia, Ashurbanipal's library is the single most important source. The transcription (normalization) of this edition generally follows the main Nineveh text. Where this was broken, other Assyrian, then Babylonian, texts were used.

Abusch prefaces his presentation of this Akkadian composition and ceremony with a few words of introduction about Mesopotamian magic and witchcraft and about the ancient literature that centers upon such concerns. "I understand as magical those Mesopotamian rites that address the human needs, crises, and desires, especially of the individual but also of the king. In contrast to some later western societies, magic in Mesopotamia was regarded as legitimate and as part of the established religion. Therefore, in a Mesopotamian context, witchcraft (e.g., *kišpû*, *ruḥû*, *rusû*, *upšāšû lemmûtu*, etc.) refers

not to magical behavior as such, but to inimical behavior, that is, to the practice of magic for antisocial and destructive purposes” (p. 1).

From 2600–100 BCE texts in Sumerian and Akkadian refer to personal crisis and individual suffering, but “the most important sources detailing ways to cope with illness, danger, and personal difficulties are the various types of texts that describe symptoms, provide etiological or descriptive diagnoses, and prescribe ways to deal with evil and suffering. These treatments include medical therapies, ritual prescriptions, and oral rites (prayers and incantations)” (p. 1). Therapeutic acts may be undertaken by the individual himself or by a professional healer. One may use ritual or ceremonial therapies (*āšipūtu*) or traditional herbal therapy (*asūtu*).

The texts are guides to performances that were consulted by magicians and herbalists. They present the elements crucial to the ritual activity and a statement describing the circumstance and purpose of the activity. At first only the incantation was written down, subsequently other instructions were added (time, place, manner of ritual performance and description of the problem, diagnosis, statement of purpose). Incantations are found in various written contexts: 1) As part of short rituals; 2) in short collections of incantations (with some ritual instructions); 3) in standardized scribal series—some collections, others complex lengthy ceremonies such as *Maqlû*.

“The personal crises that stand at the center of the therapeutic texts may play out on the physical, psychological, psychosomatic, or social plane” (p. 2). Especially when treated by the exorcist/incantation-priest (*āšipū*), the distress will be seen as the result of action or inaction of supernatural powers. Some of these agencies are gods, demons, ghosts, tutelary gods, witches, evil omens, curses, and sins.

The body of Babylonian and Assyrian anti-witchcraft texts is part of a larger corpus of therapeutic texts. The Mesopotamian anti-witchcraft corpus comprises hundreds of texts containing oral rites, symbolic rituals, medical treatments, descriptions of symptoms, diagnoses, and prognoses.

Previously edited by Knut L. Tallqvist (1895) and Gerhard Meier (1937), *Maqlû* is the longest and most significant Mesopotamian text concerned with combating witchcraft. Eight tablets of incantations and one ritual tablet make up *Maqlû*. The incantation tablets record almost one hundred incantations; these are cited by incipit in the ritual tablet, which also gives ritual instructions. *Maqlû* was long thought to be a random collection of witchcraft materials. However, Abusch discovered that *Maqlû* was a single complex ceremony, performed during a single night and into the following morning at the end of the month Abu. This was a time when spirits were thought to move back and forth between the netherworld and this world. The exorcist and his patient, usually a member of the male elite, were the primary participants.

“In the main, the incantations and rituals of *Maqlû* are directed against witches and witchcraft. The ceremony was intended to counteract and dispel evil magic and its effects, to protect the patient, and to punish and render ineffectual those responsible for the evil. The witch was to be executed. Overall in *Maqlû* she was not to be buried; rather fire and/or animals were to destroy her corpse, thus depriving her of any possibility of burial—the ritual was intended to destroy both the body and ghost of the witch” (pp. 4–5).

The long ritual of nearly a hundred incantations grew out of a much shorter ritual comprised of only ten incantations. The short ritual was performed during the morning and contained most of the important ritual actions found in the first division of the longer work. The short ceremony falls into four sections. Section one hinges on the judgment and burning of the witch. Figurines of the witches are set out in a crucible. Section two focusses on the release of witchcraft and the liberation of the victim. Section three revolves on extinguishing both the fire and the witch’s life. The smoldering figurines are drenched in water. Section four centers on the disposal of the witches’ remains and the permanent expulsion of their ghosts. The short version, having destroyed the witch and her witchcraft and protected the victim, here comes to an end. It builds on the basic rituals of burning, drowning, and burial and adds destruction and release from witchcraft, protection against future attacks, and turning back witchcraft on the witch.

This short ceremony was significantly expanded and changed into a nighttime ceremony to produce the standard long version. The long version may be divided into three divisions (the first two performed at night, the third in early morning): I) Tablets I–V // Ritual Tablet 1–95—burning and dousing

figurines of the witch; II) Tablets VI–VII 54 // Ritual Tablet 96–137—fumigation, protection of the patient’s house, massaging the patient; III) Tablets VII 55–VIII // Ritual Tablet 138–79—washing the patient over representations of the witch. Each division’s incantations have common themes; they thus develop a set of ideas that parallel or derive from the rites of the division, thus restating the central ideas and ritual activities of the division. “Thus, the work has both a ritual and conceptual structure as well as a narrative progression that impart a coherence and a distinctive character and tone to the ceremony” (p. 17).

The first division opens with an invocation to the Gods of the Night and indicts the witches. The witch is destroyed by fire and water. With the incantation “Be off, be off” (V 158–75 // Ritual Tablet 90’–91’) the dead witches are expelled and commanded never to return. In the second division fumigation is performed to counteract and disperse the attacks of witchcraft. Objects are set up for the protection of the patient and he is massaged with oil. “The last three incantations of the second division (VII 22–28, 29–46, and 47–54) focus on the healing and protection of the patient by the application of oil to his body. This is developed most clearly in VII 29–46, a well-known *Kultmittelbeschwörung* that was imported into *Maqlû*” (p. 24). The third division coincides with the coming of dawn. The primary rite is washing with water. While washing is a typical morning activity, here it serves the two motives of causing the witchcraft to revert to the witch and of cleansing the patient of evil. The text describes how the witch forms a replica of his person, with twisted and bound limbs. Then he makes a replica of the witch by the same actions she performed. He causes her to experience the witchcraft she had performed against him, asks that the evil be rinsed from his body and flow to her. He finishes with a request that a substitute stand in for him and receive the evil.

Some of the incantations of the standard version have undergone change. This is known from the existence of variant forms of the incantations and through critical internal analysis. “While many of the incantations in *Maqlû* were composed specifically for inclusion in it, others were taken over from different, often simpler, magical ceremonies” (p. 29). Abusch discusses three examples, from one that requires the least amount of analysis and interpretation to the one that requires the most.

Overall, Abusch has done an admirable job in being true to the Akkadian original, in word order and semantics, and creating a meaningful modern translation. This book is highly recommended to anyone who is interested in Mesopotamian culture in general and in therapeutic texts in particular.

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*Royal versus Divine Authority: 7th Symposium on Egyptian Royal Ideology.* Edited by FILIP COPPINS; JIŘÍ JANÁK; and HANA VYMAZALOVÁ. *Königtum, Staat und Gesellschaft früher Hochkulturen*, vol. 4.4. Wiesbaden: HARRASSOWITZ VERLAG, 2015. Pp. 358, illus. €84 (paper).

This series of symposia approaches ancient Egyptian royal ideology from a broad range of perspectives—political, archaeological, iconographic, environmental, ritual, cosmic, and administrative. The specific focus of this volume, “royal versus divine authority,” implying as it does a competition or contrast, is rarely addressed in these essays. Andrea Gnirs, in “Royal Power in Times of Disaster,” looks at the challenge natural disasters placed on royal authority, as they were interpreted as expressions of divine displeasure and challenges to the king’s legitimacy. He presents sound overviews of the effects of high and low Nile floods, famine, and plague, as well as less common events, summarized as “tempests, torrents and earthquakes.” More than any other entry in this volume, here we see the potential for a breach between the royal and divine authority explored.

Filip Coppens and Jiří Janák interpret patterns in depictions of the Ogdoad at Dendera as an expression of Hathor’s dominance over Re, and of the power of the gods over the foreign king. All of the other chapters explore relationships which show little sign of significant conflict.