

notes that “the foundations for an idealistic philosophical turn are, in fact, well established within the earliest textual traditions of canonical Buddhism.” Nonetheless, he concludes that “the meditative experiences of the *Saddhsu* [= *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra*] *yogācāra*-s, coupled with certain doctrinal notions about the relationship between mind-consciousness and sense experience, laid the foundations for frameworks of thought that border on idealism.” His argument is not totally unreasonable, but, in my opinion, he exaggerates the connection with *Vijñānavāda*.

From the start Stuart implies that *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra* is a very important text. He states that “it is outside of the scholastic mainstream but perhaps as influential as the early materials preserved in the *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra*.” Referring to quotations in *Sūtrasamuccaya*, *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, and *Dharmasamuccaya*, Stuart says that the *sūtra* became well known in India. However, the handful of quotations in *Sūtrasamuccaya* and *Śikṣāsamuccaya* are simply accounts of the realms of hell-beings and *pretas*, while *Dharmasamuccaya* is just a collection of verses from *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra*. In none of these texts is there any philosophical discussion of the *sūtra*, and there seems to be no reference to it in Indian Buddhist commentarial literature. At least in India, no later text has noted the philosophical novelties identified by Stuart, such as an implicit promotion of a bodhisattva path and a tendency toward *Vijñānavāda*. It is cited fairly often by Chinese and Japanese Buddhist authors, but their interest seems primarily to have been in hells and hungry ghosts.

Putting these criticisms aside, I want to emphasize the value of Stuart’s work. He approaches with utmost seriousness the formidable tasks of editing, translating, and commenting upon an unusual and difficult text. His book is a reliable basis for further work on *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra* and a provocative contribution to the literature on meditation. Daniel Stuart is a very talented scholar, and his book is a major accomplishment in the field of Buddhist Studies.

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The Babylonian Theodicy. By TAKAYOSHI OSHIMA. State Archives of Assyria Cuneiform Texts, vol. 9. Helsinki: THE NEO-ASSYRIAN TEXT CORPUS PROJECT, 2013. Pp. lxiii + 63. \$39 (paper). [Distributed by Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, Ind.]

Takayoshi Oshima, of the Friedrich-Schiller University in Jena, has given the field a valuable book that not only meets its goals as a learning tool for students of Akkadian, but will also stimulate discussion in a classroom setting.

The present volume may be seen as only one piece of Oshima’s research program related to Mesopotamian wisdom texts. In the volume under review, Oshima alludes to his *Babylonian Poems of Pious Sufferers: Ludlul Bel Nemeqi and the Babylonian Theodicy* (ORA 14; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), in which he has now published new materials and re-collations. A comparison with W. G. Lambert’s *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* shows that more than half a dozen new fragments are included. In short, the new material offers significant gains in the text of strophes XIX and XXI, as well as smaller advances elsewhere, e.g., strophes I and V. Oshima’s edition covers (fully or partially) 272 of the composition’s original 297 lines. Since a more thorough discussion of the new tablets appears in the monograph, this review will focus largely on the textbook and its introductory materials.

The SAACT series will be familiar to Assyriologists. It is rooted in the idea of giving students just moving beyond an introductory grammar some simplified resources as they gain the skills to transition to less-well-curated texts. In the case of the present volume, that means that the inventory of signs is limited to the 189 that are actually used in the text. It also includes a seven-page glossary of Akkadian terms that appear, as well as brief lists of the few logograms and proper names.

The cuneiform text itself, which covers just over six pages, is presented with an effort to represent the condition of the broken tablets, in which shaded areas indicate the lost sections. The cuneiform is represented in a standardized font, with hollow wedge heads representing signs that are restored rather than represented on an extant copy. The effect of the whole is utilitarian; although a hand-copy would certainly be more attractive, beginning readers of cuneiform may be grateful not to have to struggle

with the vagaries and variant forms of real cuneiform texts. (Hand-copies and photographs are provided in the ORA monograph.)

The volume also offers seventeen pages of judicious philological commentary. The commentary is not intended to be comprehensive with respect to explaining linguistic issues; it presupposes knowledge of Akkadian and access to reference tools. Oshima's philological notes on the text's often esoteric and even recondite language are conversant with scholarship on the *Babylonian Theodicy*, particularly the views of leading figures such as Lambert, von Soden, and Foster. Oshima is not reticent to add his own insights, and for these he often relies on the Late Babylonian *Theodicy Commentary*. In a number of footnotes, he promises further reflection on the commentary in a forthcoming publication.

Oshima continues in the vein of recent SAACT volumes (VI–VIII), which have included concise but quite useful orientations to the texts and the secondary scholarship that surrounds them. The introduction covers thirty-eight pages. It includes discussions of the poem's literary style, its authorship and date, its plot and message, and the identity of its speakers and readers.

In general, the introductory discussions are helpful and well suited to their target audience. Oshima summarizes the main topic of the poem as “the importance of worshiping the gods despite occasional sentiments of injustice” (p. xvii), and he has a well-tuned ear for the characters. There is even a bit of dry humor, as when he identifies the tendency of the protagonist to complain about “godless fools and impious rascals, whom he tends to envy” (p. xviii).

Oshima deems plausible the attribution of the work to (E)saggil-kīnam-ubbib, whose name appears in the sentence spelled out by the first signs of each strophe. (E)saggil-kīnam-ubbib is identified, in the list of kings and their counselors from Uruk, as the *ummānu* associated with Nebuchadnezzar I and Adad-apla-iddina, so the common conclusion that he was an important scholar in the eleventh century is adopted, though Oshima stops short of associating the poem with particular historical events.

Naturally, certain issues invite discussion. In his remarks on literary style, Oshima discusses the euphony of the acrostic beginning of the lines in each strophe as “rhyme” (pp. xii–xiv). While there is a tradition of recognizing rhyme in Akkadian and Sumerian literature, and while I do not wish to identify rhyme only with end-rhyme, I do not think that the effect created by the repeated line openings is best described as rhyme; read aloud, it simply does not create that effect. Nor am I convinced that other “rhymes” identified (such as *ikappudūšu nērti* and *išū irītu* in ll. 284–85) actually rhyme either. Some of these phenomena could be more fruitfully discussed under hom(oi)oarchon, and others under some category of soundplay, such as assonance and consonance.

Other assertions may also be questioned; for example, Oshima writes that, “in the Mesopotamian world, the righteousness of the individual citizens played no role when it came to the destruction of a city,” rather, “the king held full responsibility” (p. xxxv). This was not always the case. For example, the text commonly called “Esarhaddon's Rebuilding of Babylon” (BM 91027) recounts that Marduk became enraged with the city in part because “the people who dwelt in Babylon answered each other ‘yes’ (when they meant) ‘no,’ speaking lies all the time.” Therefore the god “set his mind to leveling the land and destroying its people.”

Oshima also argues that “[b]y carefully removing the identities of the gods and the characters of the poem,” the author of the *Babylonian Theodicy* not only “created [an] enduring kind of universal dogma,” but also advanced in the direction of “monotheistic theology” (p. xlvi). The relationship of (particularly first-millennium) Mesopotamian religious thought to monotheism is of course well-trodden and disputed ground; I am accustomed to speaking of summodeism, at most, rather than monotheism, but the future publication which Oshima promises on the topic should be worth looking forward to.

There is some inconsistency when Oshima contests the identification of the protagonist's interlocutor as a “friend,” perceiving “someone who is older and more learned than the interlocutor” (p. xi), yet he goes on to adopt the term “friend” (heuristically?) throughout the volume (e.g., pp. xix–xxii). There are also a few instances in which Oshima's translations vary when he cites them in the introductory discussions. The volume has a few typos, which by and large do not detract from its usefulness.

In one of the most absorbing sections of the introduction, Oshima argues that “the author of the dialogue was actually identifying himself with the friend and not with the sufferer” (p. xxxvi), that the friend was an *ummānu*, and that the sufferer was his apprentice. He goes on to describe his idea of Mesopota-

mian schools in some detail. Building on Petra D. Gesche's well-received *Schulunterricht in Babylonien im ersten Jahrtausend v. Chr.* (AOAT 275; 2000), he posits that during the first couple of stages of their education scribes "still had very limited access to the 'Scriptures' as a whole" (p. xli), because they had not proven themselves qualified. (Here he adopts Parpola's identification of the ultimate sources of secret, sacred knowledge as "Scriptures" [p. xl].) Oshima posits that to be considered qualified, scribes had to "demonstrate their absolute loyalty and trust to the gods" (p. xlv), and that the *Babylonian Theodicy* served as a kind of curriculum to ensure that there were no "godless fools in the scholarly world of the ancients" (p. xlvi). Therefore the rarity of exemplars of the text—which could make one doubt that it was part of the scribal curriculum at all—is explained by the fact that it was used *only at the highest level of education*, comparable to an authoritative scholarly monograph that is held by only a small number of research libraries. Unless new data comes to light, this argument about the role of the *Babylonian Theodicy* in scribal education is likely to remain in the realm of intriguing speculation.

The deeper question raised by Oshima's argument concerns the purpose of the composition. It can be doubted that the poem reassures its hearers and readers about the justice of the gods. Unlike, for example, *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*, the poem does not end with praise, but with a series of precatives—to the very end, the speaker is still entreating the gods to have mercy (ll. 295–97). The sufferer is humbled, neither lifting his head nor praising (ll. 291–93). He has not found help (l. 290). In this way, the poem reads like the dialogues of *Job without the prose epilogue*. Furthermore, simply raising questions about judgment surely creates or emboldens doubts about divine justice. A text like the *Babylonian Theodicy* would have made for a challenging curriculum indeed. Or should we imagine hearers very different from ourselves, and a context very different from our own, so that it could be understood as settling rather than stirring up profound theological unease? In any case, students and instructors of Akkadian today will be pleased to have Oshima's excellent volume as part of their own curricula.

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Nergal and Ereškigal. By SIMONETTA PONCHIA and MIKKO LUUKKO. State Archives of Assyria Cuneiform Texts, vol. 8. Helsinki: THE NEO-ASSYRIAN TEXT CORPUS PROJECT, 2013. Pp. cviii + 82. \$44 (paper). [Distributed by Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, Ind.]

This new edition of *Nergal and Ereškigal* includes an introductory essay followed by the transliteration, translation, and notes on the Middle Babylonian version from Amarna, a list of symbols and abbreviations, and a select bibliography. Next come the composite computer-generated cuneiform text of the first-millennium copies (one from Huzirina/Sultantepe in NA script and the other from Uruk in LB script), composite transliteration and translation, commentary to the text edition, and a comparison between these two manuscripts. Finally, there is a list of logograms and their readings, glossary, index of divine names, and a sign list.

The focus of the book is on the first millennium, although the MB version is briefly discussed. The authors explain that even though the *SACT* series is devoted mainly to the publication of texts from Assurbanipal's library, the inclusion of *Nergal and Ereškigal* is based on the possibility that the famous library at Nineveh had housed copies of this composition that went missing. The decision is most appropriate and the book is welcome.

The introduction contains a table showing the differences and similarities in the plots of the Amarna and the first millennium versions, and discusses topics pertaining to the place of *Nergal and Ereškigal* in the literary, erudite, and ideological context of the NA period. There is a subheading on the motifs and narrative techniques, although the analysis concentrates on the divine protagonists. The authors present a wealth of information regarding the attestations of both gods in various Assyrian sources. The section about *Nergal* is naturally lengthier because he was recorded more extensively. The evidence is supported by rich bibliographic references. Regrettably, the select bibliography excludes titles that had