

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

been cited in the introduction and commentaries. Similarly, the addition of a list of previously published cuneiform copies, transliterations, and translations, such as has been included in other volumes of the series (e.g., *SAACT* 6, pp. xii–xiii), would have contributed to the thoroughness of the work.

The authors offer a number of new readings and interpretations, which are thoroughly explained in the commentary. In what follows, I provide selected notes on the text edition and translation. In the MB version, lines r. 5–8 and r. 26–31 (p. xcv), the names ending in the accusative should be given in the nominative case in the translation: Muttabriqu, Šarrabtu, Rābišu, Bennu, Šidānu, Ummu, and Li’bu. In the first-millennium composite, the second divine name in l. 51 is reinterpreted as ^dna-āš-(AN).KUG.GA = *Nāš-šamê-ellūti*, which is explained as a new reading not corresponding to a usual divine epithet (p. 36). The editors further think that the pair Engur and Nāš-šamê-ellūti may represent a learned way to refer to the Anunnaki and the Igigi gods (pp. 36–37). This differs from the previous explication of the signs as ^dna-āš <ili> *elli* (KÜ.GA), where the divine name is understood as possibly a debased form of the name Nanše, followed by an apposition (see, e.g., Gurney 1960, 110–11, l. 41’; and Pettinato 2000, 76–77, l. 41). Other attestations are needed to determine which of these two interpretations (or another) is correct. Note that in both cases the logogram dingir/an is considered a scribal omission.

The section from l. 61 to l. 75 is restored from parallels from the same composition, as indicated in the note on p. 14. Lines 103–4 (p. 15) are interpreted anew: ¹⁰³[^d]É.A *an-ni-tú ina še-me-šú zik-ra it-ta-mi ana ŠA-šú*, ¹⁰⁴*u[l-t]e-pi-iš-ma miḫ-ra a-ga-a u šá-ḫ[a²]-a-r[a]*, “Hearing this, Ea conceived a *logos-man* in his mind, and had a duplicate, an axe, and a *net* made” (p. 25). The rendering of the first line, as the editors explain (p. 40), is based on possible parallels with passages from Inana’s and Ištar’s *Descents*, where creatures were created to save the goddess by distracting and deceiving Ereškigal.

The authors maintain that “[t]he term *zikru*, the same used in *Ištar’s Descent* (l. 91), is ambiguous, because it may mean ‘male/man’ and ‘word’ and was perhaps used in that text to interpret the Sumerian myth, where a *kurgarru* and a *galatura* were Enki’s creatures” (p. 40). But note that in *Ištar’s Descent* ll. 91–92 *zikru*, even if a pun might have been intended, does not mean “man” (= *zikaru*) but a “concept,” or more loosely an “idea” (*zikru* < *zakāru*), thus: *Ea ina emqi libbišu ibtani zikru, ibnima Ašūšu-namir assinnu*, “In his wisdom Ea conceived an idea and created Ašūšu-namir, the *assinnu-man*” (see CAD Z s.v. *zikru* B 2, p. 116b; for *zikru* < *zakāru* see von Soden’s translation “Personen”—but not man, male—for the SB dialect in AHW sv. *zikru*, p. 1527b). In spite of the allusions to *Ištar’s Descent*, I still prefer the less creative and more conventional translation “(Ea) said to himself” for the sentence *zikra ittami ana libbišu* (e.g., Gurney 1960, 113, l. 21’; Pettinato 2000, 81, l. 21, Foster 2005, 515, l. 21’).

Line 104 has alternative readings for every word. But what is the meaning of the newly interpreted sentence “And (he) had a duplicate, an axe and a *net* made”? Granting that we accept the restoration of the verb and the reading *miḫ-ra*, I do not see why one should translate *agū* as “axe” (a rare meaning mostly attested in lexical texts; note also the use of *ḫaššinnu* in l. 111), and why change the previously suggested *šá-pa-a-r[a]* for *šá-ḫ[a²]-a-r[a]*? The authors acknowledge that “the interpretation of the partially broken *šahāru* (*sic*) . . . is tentatively interpreted as *net*” (p. 40). But this is problematic because the noun, as the authors correctly listed it in the glossary, is *šaharru*, which leaves the extra /a/ vowel unexplained.

The interpretation from context of l. 103 is extended to the following and the editors comment that l. 104 “completes the preceding line and the description of the creature conceived by Ea” (p. 40). It is also peculiar that this creature is not mentioned again, at least in the extant texts. The suggestion that the objects in l. 104 (i.e., “duplicate,” “axe,” and “*net*”) may be among those that Nergal carries in ll. 377–82 cannot be currently proven because those lines are partially broken and the items unreadable.

Other observations relate to minor technical matters. The double exclamation mark (!!) is missing from the list of symbols on p. ciii. The same is the case with the exclusion of () to indicate the omission (usually expressed by < >) of the sign AN in l. 51. Similarly, the asterisk (*) used after LÚ in l. 129 is not listed.

There are inconsistencies in certain transcriptions and translations; for instance: the verb *išīḫ* in l. 398 is quoted without vowel contraction (p. 63) (*šīāhu*) and then listed as *šāhu* (p. 72) in the glossary; *abbuttu* is translated as “tresses” in l. 401, but rendered as “head hair” in the glossary (perhaps “coif-

ture” is more generic than “tresses” and less general than “head hair”); certain nouns are cited in the genitive instead of the nominative case, for instance *mê* (in the glossary and in the list of logograms: A → *mê*, A.MEŠ → *mê*), *šamê ellūti* (in the list of logograms as the Akkadian translation of AN KUG.GA).

One may not always agree with Ponchia and Luukko’s interpretations, but the care they have put into preparing a new edition of this important text is commendable.

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The Correspondence of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II from Calah/Nimrud. By MIKKO LUUKKO. State Archives of Assyria, vol. 19. Helsinki: NEO-ASSYRIAN TEXT CORPUS PROJECT, 2012. Pp. lxxiv + 287, 3 pls., illus. \$89.50 (paper).

This volume provides a critical edition of the so-called Nimrud Letters, which consist of more than two hundred epistolary texts discovered at the North-West Palace of Nimrud during the 1952 British excavations. The corpus is composed of the late eighth-century B.C.E. state correspondence from the reigns of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II, possibly including a few letters from the short reign of Shalmaneser V as well. One hundred five letters of the corpus were first published by H. W. F. Saggs in the journal *Iraq* in 1966 and 1974. Later, Saggs published more than a hundred additional letters, as well as a revised edition of the previously published ones in his volume *The Nimrud Letters, 1952* (CTN 5 = Saggs 2001). Though the republication of the same group of texts only eleven years after Saggs’ *editio princeps* may look unusual in Assyriological convention, Luukko’s volume is full of merits, which justify his re-editing.

The tablets of the corpus are held in two collections, one in the British Museum and the other in the Iraq Museum in Baghdad. Luukko was able to collate only the former half of the corpus, and was dependent on Saggs’ hand copies, generally considered to be highly accurate, for the remainder. Luukko’s edition is much better than CTN 5 in many respects. He reads fragmentary passages with extensive restorations and valuable critical apparatus, elucidating the contents of the letters. He has made four new joins (to nos. 39, 52, 147, and 206), in addition to the earlier indirect join made by S. Parpola (SAA 15 [= Fuchs and Parpola 2001], no. 83), and has edited five previously unpublished fragments (nos. 7, 32, 58, 64, and 204). Excluding eight non-epistolary texts published in CTN 5, Luukko presents a total of 229 (201 Neo-Assyrian and 28 Neo-Babylonian) letters; these include the twelve letters already edited in SAA 1, 5, and 15 as correspondence from the reign of Sargon II, for which Luukko gives only cross-references to the previous SAA volumes but no transliteration and translation. The concordance to SAA 1, 5, and 15 is missing in the book’s indices, but it is now provided on the website “Assyrian empire builders” (Luukko, “Updates to *Nimrud Letters* Editions Previously Published in the State Archives of Assyria Series”), which also modifies the edition of the previous SAA volumes (April 2013, <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sargon/royalcorrespondence/reviewsandupdates/>).

In his introduction (pp. xv–lxxiv), Luukko summarizes the main features of the Nimrud Letters and discusses the events with which they deal. Since the great majority of the letters were exchanged between the king and a relatively small number of officials, Luukko assumes that power in the Assyrian empire of the late eighth century was steadily concentrated in a few hands. He gives a list of provincial governors, attested either as senders or addressees, or mentioned in other ways in the letters, and correlates them with references to the appointments of anonymous governors that are frequently