

- Janda, M. 2011. Review of A. Payne, *Hieroglyphic Luwian, 2nd Revised Edition*. *OLZ* 106: 180–81.
- Kloekhorst, A. 2004. The Preservation of \**h*<sub>1</sub> in Hieroglyphic Luwian: Two Separate *a*-Signs. *HS* 117: 26–49.
- Melchert, H. C. 2003. Language. In *The Luwians*, ed. id. Pp. 170–210. Leiden.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2010. Spelling of Initial /a-/ in Hieroglyphic Luwian. In *ipamati kistamati pari tumatimis: Luwian and Hittite Studies Presented to J. David Hawkins on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday*, ed. Itamar Singer. Pp. 147–58. Tel Aviv.
- Simon, Zs. 2013. Once Again on the Hieroglyphic Luwian Sign \*19 <á>. *IF* 118: 1–21.
- Weeden, M. 2013. A Probable Join to the “Kırşehir Letter.” *AAS* 18: 15–17.
- Yakovovich, I. 2013. The Degree of Comparison in Luwian. *IF* 118: 155–68.

ZSOLT SIMON

LUDWIG-MAXIMILIANS-UNIVERSITÄT, MUNICH

---

*Babylonian Poems of Righteous Sufferers: Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi and the Babylonian Theodicy*. By TAKAYOSHI OSHIMA. *Orientalische Religionen in der Antike*, vol. 14. Tübingen: MOHR SIEBECK, 2014. Pp. xx + 572, 65 pls. €139.

“The main objective of this monograph is a new critical text edition of both *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* (‘Let Me Praise the Lord of Wisdom’), known also as the ‘Babylonian Job’ or ‘Poem of the Righteous Sufferer’, and the so-called *Babylonian Theodicy*” (p. 1).

Readership of the book will be constituted by Assyriologists, but, more generally, by students of theology, biblical studies, and comparative religious studies. To engage this varied audience, Oshima attempts to translate these ancient texts to convey both the literal meaning of each phrase and an understanding of the general conceptions behind it.

Despite the broad appeal of these poems, Oshima has concentrated his efforts on philological work. He does not provide a comprehensive comparative literary analysis of the poems nor an in-depth discussion of the Babylonian views of divine judgment over humankind and its effects on their *Weltanschauung*. Oshima hopes to take up these topics, and the relationship of the Babylonian “pious sufferer” poems to the biblical book of Job, in future publications.

The book is divided into six parts: 1) Chapters I–II include introductions and the transliterations and translations of the composite texts of these poems. The composite text is set out on opposing pages with the Akkadian transliteration on the left, the English translation on the right. 2) Chapter III provides detailed philological and critical notes on the poems. These copious notes converse with other Mesopotamian texts and modern interpreters. 3) Chapter IV gives an arrangement of all manuscripts of the poems, both those published beforehand and those previously unpublished, like a musical score. In listing the manuscripts of *Ludlul*, Oshima does not follow any previous system, but has assigned a new set of sigla to all the manuscripts. 4) Chapter V offers critical editions of texts related to these two poems. 5) The book includes an extensive bibliography, a glossary, and eight indices, and 6) hand copies and photographs of the cuneiform manuscripts.

Oshima avoids using the term “wisdom literature” to refer to the poems in question, but prefers to restrict the use of that label to a particular group of books within the Hebrew Bible (Proverbs, Job, Qohelet, and some Psalms). Oshima favors the term “didactic texts” to designate these Mesopotamian texts.

### *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*

This monologue recounts one man’s suffering and his miraculous recovery from illness with the help of the god Marduk. The poem was composed for the narrator himself, a man named Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan (III, 44 and V, 111 and 119), to praise Marduk’s saving power and to warn others of the dire consequences of sinning against the god and his temple. From indications in other texts, Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan probably lived around 1300 B.C.E., during the reign of King Nazimarutšaš (1307–1282), and

was of high social status. Despite the lack of evidence, Oshima opines that a *mašmaššu/āšipu* composed *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* at Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan's commission.

W. G. Lambert's 1960 critical edition of *Ludlul* was based on twenty-nine exemplars. Since 1960, various scholars have identified an additional thirty-seven manuscripts, bringing the total for the present work to sixty-six tablets and tablet fragments. The *Ludlul Commentary* provides an additional fifteen or sixteen lines which have not yet been correlated with the main poem. Though the oldest datable manuscripts come from Aššurbanipal's Library in the seventh century B.C.E., Oshima posits that the poem was composed late in the Kassite period.

While it has long been assumed that the entire text of *Ludlul* consisted of four 120-line tablets, Oshima argues that the poem consisted of 600 lines on five tablets. Tablet IV is reconstructed from *Ludlul Commentary* rev. 16–30, which do not correspond with Tablet III or Tablet V, indicating that there was an intervening tablet. In light of this evidence, the erstwhile Tablet IV is considered now to be Tablet V.

After lengthy expressions of reverence, the narrator states that adversity came upon him suddenly. Marduk was the ultimate cause of this misfortune. The pious narrator complains that no one understands the ways of the gods. A series of dreams, of Marduk's messengers, marks the turning point in the narrator's situation. Marduk saved the narrator from his misfortune. Oshima suggests that Tablet IV recounted the narrator's recovery and reconciliation and reveals the narrator's former negligence toward Marduk's shrine Esagil, which was the ultimate cause of his trouble. Tablet V resumes the story with further glorification of Marduk's power of redemption. In V, 40–53 Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan's visit to Esagil is the climax of *Ludlul*. He comes with offerings to Esagil and receives blessings at each gate, then he publicly recounts his experience and offers praise to the gods. The poem concludes, as Akkadian hymns and prayers often end, with praise to Marduk's glory.

According to Oshima, *Ludlul* was a political criticism against the Kassite kings, who seemed to regard Nippur and Enlil more highly than Babylon and Marduk. The protagonist in *Ludlul* interprets his adversity as arising from his negligence regarding Marduk and his rites at Esagil. There is a very discrete antithesis in *Ludlul* to the pan-Mesopotamian religious policy of the Kassite kings.

W. G. Lambert argued that *Enūma eliš* was composed after the victory of Nebuchadnezzar I (1124–1103) over the Elamites and the recovery of Marduk's statue. There was likely a religious reform under Marduk's priests at this time. Oshima says, "Given the observation, one may conclude that, if *Enūma eliš* was a 'manifesto' of Marduk's divine rulership, *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* was a 'credo' that set the foundation of the belief in Marduk as the rightful keeper of the divine order, so to speak" (p. 73).

### *The Babylonian Theodicy*

This poem is in the form of a dialogue between two learned men. Oshima prefers to refer to the first protagonist as a "sceptic," rather than as a "sufferer." The second speaker, often called the "friend," is probably older and more learned than the sceptic and incarnates what might be called the "official" theology.

Oshima notes that only nine manuscripts are known to him, all from the first millennium. It is possible to recover fully or in part 272 of a presumed total 297 lines, and Oshima suggests a late second millennium B.C.E. date for its composition.

The *Babylonian Theodicy* consists of twenty-seven strophes of eleven lines each. All sentences of a strophe begin with the same sign, the twenty-seven signs taken together form an acrostic which reveals the name of the poem's author. The acrostic reads: "I am Saggil-kīnam-ubbib, an incantation priest, the one who worships the gods and the king." Although he identifies himself as a *mašmaššu* (incantation priest), he probably also functioned as a *ummānu* (scholar), indeed an important scholar of the eleventh century B.C.E.

One cannot relate the *Babylonian Theodicy* to any particular historical event. "The main topic of the *Babylonian Theodicy* is the importance of worshipping the gods despite occasional feelings of injustice" (p. 125). With regard to the protagonists, this is a dialogue between two unnamed persons. Their exact relationship and social status is not stated. Oshima suggests that context implies they are learned men, probably an *ummānu* and his apprentice.

The debate centers on a doctrinal point, the meaning of belief in the gods and its benefits. The sceptic sees himself as a victim of social injustice. The friend speaks of the enduring principles of wisdom by repeating three major points: 1) the incomprehensible character of the divine will, 2) the impermanent wealth of the faithless versus the enduring wealth of the pious, 3) the importance of rituals as the means of attaining the divine realm of blessing.

The friend teaches orthodox doctrine established by the early second millennium B.C.E. and maintained in the first millennium. The sceptic finally realizes that he has suffered maltreatment from others, not because of any lack of divine justice, but because of his own lack of respect for the divine order and his own lack of piety towards the gods.

The *Babylonian Theodicy* ends with an appeal to the human king to reestablish piety to the gods. "Just like the acrostic of this poem, this lengthy ancient literary text concludes with a declaration of faith in the gods and the king" (p. 142).

Given the very low literacy rate in the ancient Mesopotamian world, Oshima assumes that the "audience" of this poem was limited to the administrators and bureaucrats, the intellectual and spiritual elites and their apprentices. The small number of exemplars suggests the poem was not widely known even among the literate communities. Therefore Oshima believes "that the model for the protagonist consisted of trainees in the fields of exorcism, lamentation-priesthood, divination, omen texts, and pharmaceuticals, and that these were 'the targeted readers' of the *Babylonian Theodicy*" (p. 143).

This is an excellent volume, sure to repay anyone who studies it.

JOEL H. HUNT  
ATHENS, GA

*Klagetraditionen: Form und Funktion der Klage in den Kulturen der Antike*. Edited by MARGARET JAQUES. Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis, vol. 251. Fribourg, Switzerland: ACADEMIC PRESS, 2011. Pp. vii + 110, illus. SF35.

This is a collection of papers read at a conference of the Swiss Society for Ancient Near Eastern Studies (SGOA = *Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Orientalische Altertumswissenschaft*) held on September 26, 2009 at the Religionswissenschaftlichen Seminar of the University of Zurich. It contains five articles in German on lamentations in various ancient Near Eastern cultures (i.e., Sumero-Babylonian, Egyptian, that of Asia Minor, and biblical). Each contribution is about twenty pages long including a bibliography relevant to its specific subject.

In the introduction, M. Jaques explains the general purpose of the book and offers a brief presentation of each contribution (pp. 1–2). The German word "Klage" has two different basic meanings: 1) "lament, i.e., action and expression of one's sorrow or grief" and 2) "complaint as an expression of one's dissatisfaction by way of a legal action, i.e., lawsuit." Like the English word "lament, lamentation," "Klage" also refers to a literary genre as seen in the Old Testament, i.e., the Book of Lamentations.

Merely citing a dictionary entry, Jaques attempts to explain that both the action of wailing and lamentation as a literary genre are the main subject matter of the articles in this volume. I have no objection to Jaques' pragmatic approach, which sets an orientation in a succinct manner. However, because the action of wailing and the literary genre of lamentation are very generic notions, a short anthropological study offering an overview of "Klage" would have been very helpful not only for the wider public but also for the students of ancient Near Eastern studies to whom this book is addressed. A simple citation of a dictionary entry is rather too naïve.

In the first contribution, Jaques discusses Akkadian personal laments and motifs employed in them in order to complain about one's dismay. In this section, she discusses "Dingir.ša<sub>3</sub>.dab<sub>5</sub>.ba-Bußgebete," i.e., prayers with the characteristic rubric "KA-inim-ma dingir-ša<sub>3</sub>-dab<sub>5</sub>-ba gur-ru-da-kam (lit., *um das 'verknötete Herz' des Gottes zu lösen*)" (p. 6). The texts she discusses in this paper were edited by