

a strong spatial component affirming the ties between center and imperial periphery. The texts which detail the ritual are all dated to the later Neo-Assyrian period, and, as already noted by Postgate (1988: 145), several attestations for *tākultu* should be read in a secular sense (e.g., BATSH 9, 69 = Röllig 2008, dated 29/Ša-kēnāte). Evidence does, however, suggest that the Middle Assyrian *tākultu* had already acquired many of its later connotations. The celebration was duplicated in some form in provincial and local centers (Wiggermann in Duistermaat 2008: 560) and these same centers participated by supplying provisions for the celebration (BATSH 9, 101; 20/Ḫibur/Aššur-daʾān). The title of “overseer” is thereby directly associated with the king’s role in a ritual which bears exactly the sort of universalistic implications Sazonov means to examine.

While Sazonov’s work thus provides a convenient overview of royal epithets and titles from early Assyrian history, it also misses the opportunity for a more reliable and critical contribution to the topic.

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The Splintered Divine: A Study of Ištar, Baal, and Yahweh Divine Names and Divine Multiplicity in the Ancient Near East. By SPENCER L. ALLEN. *Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Records*, vol. 5. Berlin: WALTER DE GRUYTER, 2015. Pp. xxi + 457. €102.76.

Spencer Allen’s *The Splintered Divine* analyzes the phenomenon in which ancient Near Eastern deities are identified by two-component names: what he calls the “first name,” representing a common divine name like Ištar, Baal, or Yahweh, and the “last name,” providing a specifying, often geographically based, marker or epithet, such as Nineveh, Şapun, or Teman. Whereas previous scholarship has often understood gods and goddesses with geographic “last names” to be local manifestations of an overarching deity, this book argues that Ištar and Baal figures with different “last names” were, in their respective Neo-Assyrian and Levantine worlds, treated as distinct deities. Additionally, Allen demonstrates that the biblical and inscriptional evidence provides less clear answers to the question of the individuality of Yahwehs in Israel. The nature of the divine has been the subject of numerous recent studies. Allen adds to this discussion a wide range of data that will be of interest to students and scholars alike.

The Splintered Divine is comprised of six chapters, an introduction and conclusion, and over eighty pages of annotated tables that reflect the author’s 2011 dissertation research on god lists. An inadvertent

tent publishing error led to the dropping of the phrase “witness list” from the text when the book was first published; Allen has helpfully supplied an errata list (available on de Gruyter’s website) and corrected print and electronic copies have been released.

Allen opens the introduction by juxtaposing modern discussions of the seventh-century BCE cuneiform text, *Assurbanipal’s Hymn to the Ištar of Nineveh and Arbela* (SAA 3 3), with those of the late-ninth- / early-eighth-century alphabetic dedicatory inscriptions to Yahweh-of-Teman and Yahweh-of-Samaria found at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud. Inspired by Barbara Porter’s argument that the two Ištar of the Neo-Assyrian hymn represent distinct deities (Porter 2004), Allen calls for a more comprehensive analysis of divine distinctiveness across the cultures of the ancient Near East (p. 3). For Allen, scribal naming practices offer an inroad into the question “What or who was a god?” (p. 7).

Chapter 1, “Considering Multiplicity and Defining Deity,” serves two purposes: It 1) traces the history of modern scholarship on the nature of divine names, focusing on Ištar goddesses, and 2) turns to modern scholarship on divine anthropomorphism and agency in order to better answer the question “What is a god?” The former is a clear synthesis of over a century of modern research that shows the scholarly hesitancy to treat differently named Ištar as distinct deities. In the latter, Allen argues for the possible individuality of these Ištar through analogy with the ancient recognition of celestial bodies, cult statues, and cultic paraphernalia as divine beings, but his discussion of agency would have been enhanced by references to Alfred Gell’s foundational work (1998) and Irene Winter’s important response (2007). The excursus provides a helpful description of the differences between the use of “syncretism” in Egyptological vs. Classical, Biblical, and Assyriological scholarship.

Chapter 2, “Comparative Insights,” remains focused on the question of what constitutes a distinct deity, reviewing conceptualizations of Madonnas in the first millennium CE and nineteenth- and twentieth-century Italy, as well as the Hittite scribal use of “first names” (i.e., ^dIŠKUR (= 10 = U), ^dLAMMA, and ^dIŠTAR) as “divine labels” to identify classes of gods and goddesses (p. 75). Allen observes the contrast between lay and official views (§2.1), but what also emerges from this chapter are the ways in which the logo-syllabic cuneiform script can obscure distinctions between similar deities and affect ancient classification systems (p. 71 n. 38). Both issues would have benefitted from further discussion throughout the book.

Lists of gods embedded in various genres of Neo-Assyrian-period texts are the subject of chapter 3, “The Divine Hierarchy and Embedded God Lists (EGLs),” and are collected and color-coded to represent categories of deities in the extensive appendix. For Allen, the inclusion of multiple Ištar with different last names in such lists indicates that these goddesses were seen to be distinct, although he surprisingly describes this as an assumption rather than a point to be proven (p. 138). Readers may not be persuaded by all of Allen’s positions, including: the treatment of EGLs as hierarchically structured and his devaluing of localized Ištar goddesses that appear at the bottom of such lists (§3.2); his emphasis on the theological aspect of non-lexical texts (e.g., pp. 110–11) over historical and other contextual considerations; and the possibility of extracting a “lay” view of Mesopotamian deities (p. 95) from records produced by the state. Allen advertises the importance of the EGLs for the question of divine distinctiveness (pp. 138–39), but the book’s strongest arguments often come from his grammatical analyses of passages that refer to multiple localized deities.

Chapter 4, “The Ištar Goddesses of Neo-Assyria,” focuses on the many Ištar names found in Neo-Assyrian-period texts. Ištar goddesses are identified by a variety of cuneiform “first names” (e.g., ^d15, ^dINANNA, ^diš-tar) and titles (e.g., GAŠAN, NIN, *be-let*). Allen finds little significance in the use of different logograms, but it seems that scribes could use “first names” to reinforce distinctions between goddesses (see, e.g., SAA 2 2 vi 15–16, p. 143). Readers would have benefitted from a more direct discussion of the cuneiform first names and the use of *ištaru* as a common noun for “goddess” in this and earlier periods. This chapter provides evidence for the regular distinction of Ištar goddesses, but it is not clear that individual characteristics were always maintained (Nissinen forthcoming). The latter half of the chapter surveys scholarship on Ištar-of-Nineveh, Ištar-of-Arbela, Mullissu, and Assyrian Ištar (the goddesses mentioned in the NA EGLs), as well as the divine names Anunitu and Dirītu (known from earlier periods).

In its shift from Ištar goddesses to Levantine storm deities, and from Akkadian to primarily Northwest Semitic evidence, chapter 5, “Geographic Epithets in the West,” moves towards the Israelite

Yahwehs of chapter 6. Storm-gods are also known by a variety of cuneiform “first names” (e.g., ^d10, ^dIŠKUR in addition to alphabetic renderings of *ba^llu* (*b^l*), ‘lord’, a common noun that was also used as a proper name. Various Baals inhabit this chapter: Baal-of-Ugarit, Baal-of-Şapun, Baal-Şamêm, and Hadad-of-Aleppo are given particular emphasis. Whereas Allen maintains that the localized Baals known from Ugaritic ritual texts, in particular Baal-of-Şapun and Baal-of-Ugarit, acted independently (§5.2), Mark S. Smith has argued that they were not separate deities and that the texts point to the use of the overarching regional deity to magnify the local (see most recently Smith 2016). The chapter closes with a discussion of “First Millennium Northwest Semitic Goddesses” (§5.6) that begins with Ugaritic evidence.

The Yahweh evidence under study in chapter 6, “A Kuntillet ‘Ajrud Awakening,” differs from that of the previous chapters. As there are no EGLs, Allen provides a careful discussion of Deuteronomy 6:4 and the Kuntillet ‘Ajrud inscriptions mentioning Yahweh-of-Teman and Yahweh-of-Samaria (plus biblical references to Yahweh-of-Hosts and the Chemosh names on the Mesha Inscription). Yet the Bible’s long history of redaction makes it difficult to compare it with the inscriptional evidence, which may or may not represent official viewpoints. Moreover, the divine name Yahweh was never used as a common noun (like *išturu*) or divine “nickname” (like *ba^llu*) and one wonders if the identity of this god may have been more fixed as a result.

Finally, it is not clear whether and to what degree the different writing systems affected conceptualizations of divine names. The scribes who produced the biblical and inscriptional texts in Hebrew and other Northwest Semitic languages were trained to write in the (linear) alphabet—a script that did not allow for the flexibility and multivalency of the cuneiform script used in Assyria and known at Ugarit. Allen acknowledges the lack of lists and differences in name type (p. 247), but he could have done more to clarify the possible impact of different writing systems on the questions of divine multiplicity. Ultimately, he concludes that polytheistic Assyrians and Canaanites may have judged Israel’s Yahwehs to be distinct, even as “conclusions about whether Israelites or Judahites, whether in official or lay circles, worshipped other deities cannot and should not be drawn from this study” (p. 309).

Throughout the book Allen writes with a clear voice, but at times his terminology seems ill suited to the investigation. The use of “splintered” in the title and throughout the book, for example, may give the impression that the localized Ištar and Baals are diminished derivatives of an original single deity—even as the conclusion argues for their individuality. I question the epistemological underpinning of the research question “Who is a *distinct* god?” (p. 310), as it is not clear to me that this question would have been compelling to the peoples of the ancient Near East: So-called “polytheistic” systems tolerate shifting and multiple viewpoints (duBois 2014: 161–66), and the only text that addresses the question of divine multiplicity outright is Deuteronomy 6:4—a text from the “monotheistic” world of the Bible. A consequence of Allen’s interest in cross-cultural comparison is that the possible impact of socio-political factors on conceptualizations of the divine are set aside. In the end, I find myself drawn to the possibility of divine distinctiveness, but not convinced that Allen’s question should be answered in absolute terms for any of the cultures under study.

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The Eršema Prayers of the First Millennium BC. By URI GABBAY. Heidelberg Emesal-Studien, vol. 2. Wiesbaden: HARRASSOWITZ VERLAG, 2015. Pp. xv + 375, 30 pls. €89.

With *The Eršema Prayers of the First Millennium BC* (henceforth *Eršema*), Uri Gabbay presents us with a much-needed edition of all extant first-millennium Eršemas. This book, which is a revised version of Gabbay's dissertation, complements *Pacifying the Hearts of the Gods* (henceforth *Pacifying*) by the same author, which is the first volume in the new series, Heidelberg Emesal-Studien.

Eršema is therefore best understood within this two-book context, although this review focuses only on the present work—this reviewer has not read *Pacifying*. This is an important point to make, because it shapes the ways in which Gabbay deals with his subject matter. As Gabbay warns us in his introduction to *Eršema*, “the Eršemas together with other genres of Emesal prayers [have been dealt with] in my book *Pacifying the Hearts of the Gods*. In this introduction only the most relevant points will be repeated, while some issues not dealt with in the other book will be expanded” (p. 1). Unfortunately, this choice is extremely problematic, because it makes *Eršema* too heavily dependent on its predecessor. A couple of examples discussed below will illustrate this point. This is, however, the only problem in an otherwise impeccable work.

It is well known that Eršemas are ritual compositions written in Emesal and dating back to the Old Babylonian Period. They share similar “language, phraseology and form” (p. 5), but for all that they contain unique features. The main theme of the Eršemas is a goddess' lament, usually associated with the wrath of a deity causing havoc among mankind (p. 4). Yet not much work has been done on this genre, as emerges from Gabbay's review of the scholarship. With *Pacifying* and *Eršema*, Gabbay successfully rectifies this situation.

Eršema is divided into six chapters: a short introduction (pp. 1–20), the edition of the Eršemas paired with Balaḡs (pp. 21–168), the edition of the so-called Ritual Eršemas (pp. 169–260), the edition of seventeen fragments which could possibly be part of Eršemas (pp. 261–80), and a synoptic transliteration of first-millennium Eršemas and their parallels (pp. 281–343). The volume also contains thorough indexes as well as thirty plates. The result is an outstanding work in which the author displays his mastery of the topic and provides us with an important contribution to the scholarship on the Eršemas.

The introduction opens with a description of the nature of first-millennium Eršemas followed by a review of the secondary literature (pp. 1–3). The latter is surprisingly short, given the complexities of such interesting subject matter. This is not a fault of the author, naturally, as he surveys the extant studies in a concise but clear manner. It nevertheless stresses how important Gabbay's work is in filling a major gap in the scholarship.

This is followed by a brief summary of the book's plan and by the bulk of the introduction. In it Gabbay presents an overview of the typology of the Eršemas (pp. 3–4), an overview of their content (pp. 4–5), a discussion of some of their unique features (pp. 5–11), a review of the deities to whom the Eršemas were dedicated (pp. 11–12), and a description of the cultic context and performance of the Eršemas (pp. 12–13).

Classifying ancient literary genres is not an easy task. Yet when it comes to the Eršemas, the ancient Mesopotamians were very clear about their typology. Gabbay identifies two types of first-millennium Eršemas: the independent, or Ritual Eršemas, which exist independently from other Emesal texts; and the Eršemas paired with Balaḡs, another type of Emesal ritual lament. Almost all extant Balaḡs end with either one or two Eršemas. One of the main differences between these two types of Eršemas is the fact that Ritual Eršemas do not contain the pacification units, while the Eršemas paired with Balaḡs do (see below).

The content of the Eršemas has been mentioned briefly above. Generally speaking, this can be relatively standardized, and some sections—for instance the manifestation of the deity as well as his