

The Akkadian and Sumerian texts associated with the profession of the exorcist in ancient Mesopotamia – commonly referred to as *āšipūtu*, the lore of the exorcist – form one of the largest and most complex bodies of cuneiform texts. At the same time, the ritual instructions, prescriptions, prayers and incantations of this corpus of texts, often subsumed under the broad category ‘magic’, represent a prolific source of information on ancient Mesopotamian religious thought, intellectual concepts, ritual practice and social structure.

The reconstruction of the corpus of *āšipūtu* texts and the editorial work on the pertinent cuneiform manuscripts and compositions usually follow the lead of the organizational patterns that have shaped the transmission and arrangement of exorcistic texts in antiquity. The most pervasive of these patterns is the principle of aetiology that categorizes texts according to the source of evil, the agency (Akkadian *qātu*), that was considered to be the (potential) cause of a person’s suffering or misfortune: the ghost of a deceased person, a specific demon, the transgression of a taboo, witchcraft, the wrath of a deity, etc. Other organizational patterns include the type of remedy that is used (e.g., amulet necklaces) or the type of person that is concerned (e.g., infants).

Especially when dealing with comparatively well-defined bodies of texts that were already organized in (more or less) fixed series and collections by Babylonian and Assyrian scholars, there is a tendency of fragmentation in Assyriological research. Grappling with the challenges of decipherment and text reconstruction, scholars often have to neglect a broader approach to ‘their’ individual branch of *āšipūtu* that would compare its development to other text groups of the overall body of exorcistic texts and explore its relationship and potential connections to such texts (conceptual, textual, contextual).

Conversely, the editorial work on exorcistic texts that did not form part of an ancient series often has to cope with a multiplicity of transmission contexts, some of them with implications for the actual use of a ritual, incantation or prescription. With regard to many text groups, the definition of what actually constituted the body of *āšipūtu* texts is far from self-evident, especially when ‘magical’ and ‘medical’ texts (or therapeutic strategies) are transmitted together or explicitly combined.

By bringing together a group of specialists with extensive experience in editing cuneiform magical and related texts, the conference ‘Sources of Evil’ aims to explore various perspectives of interpreting the lore of *āšipūtu* beyond the editorial work on individual subgroups of texts.

The speakers

Tzvi I. Abusch (Brandeis University, Waltham)

Troels Pank Arbøll (Københavns Universitet)

Barbara Böck

(Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Madrid)

Irving L. Finkel (British Museum, London)

Eckart Frahm (Yale University, New Haven)

Andrew R. George

(School of Oriental and African Studies, London)

Nils P. Heeßel (Julius-Maximilians-Universität, Würzburg)

Enrique Jiménez (Yale University, New Haven)

Stefan M. Maul (Ruprecht-Karls-Universität, Heidelberg)

Francesca Rochberg (University of California, Berkeley)

Daniel Schwemer (Julius-Maximilians-Universität, Würzburg)

Henry Stadhouders (Universiteit Utrecht)

Avigail Wagschal (Hebrew University, Jerusalem)

Frans A. M. Wiggermann (Universiteit Leiden)

Location

The conference will be held in the rooms of the Ancient Near Eastern Studies section of the Department of Ancient Cultures of Würzburg University located in the Würzburg Residenz.

Registration

There is no participation fee. However, as the talks will take place in a mid-size classroom in the library, informal **prior registration is required** (email Ms Ursula Kraft: l-altorientalistik@uni-wuerzburg.de).

Photos

Lamaštu amulet © Trustees of the British Museum.

Neo-Assyrian clay dogs © Trustees of the British Museum.

A fish-cloaked *apkallu* sage from the Ninurta temple at Nimrud, now in the British Museum, by Greta Van Buylaere.

SOURCES OF EVIL

Complexity and systematization,
differentiation and interdependency
in Mesopotamian exorcistic lore

Julius-Maximilians-
**UNIVERSITÄT
WÜRZBURG**



Würzburg University
Lehrstuhl für Altorientalistik
Wed 15 – Fri 17 April 2015

Programme

Wednesday, 15 April

from 12:00 Refreshments

Session 1 (Chair: Daniel Schwemer)

14:00–14:30 Welcome and Introduction
Daniel Schwemer (Würzburg)

14:30–15:30 Any Old Evil Will Do!
Irving L. Finkel (London)

15:30–16:00 Coffee

Session 2 (Chair: Barbara Böck)

16:00–17:00 Mesopotamian Incantations in the
Schøyen Collection
Andrew R. George (London)

17:00–18:00 Concepts of Illness in the Exorcist's
Lore: Magic *and* Medicine,
Magic *versus* Medicine, or
neither Magic *nor* Medicine?
Nils P. Heeßel (Würzburg)

18:30 Reception in the *Antikensammlung* of
the *Martin von Wagner Museum*



Thursday, 16 April

Session 3 (Chair: Nils P. Heeßel)

9:00–9:55 Witchcraft and Incantations against
Human Rivals in the Old Babylonian
Period
Avigail Wagschal (Jerusalem)

9:55–10:50 Making New from Old: The Case of
the Collection of Incantations
'Embrocation' (*Muššu'u*)
Barbara Böck (Madrid)

10:50–11:00 Coffee

Session 4 (Chair: Andrew R. George)

11:00–12:00 Aspects of the Transmission and
Contextualization of Magical and
Medical Knowledge
Troels Pank Arbøll (Copenhagen)

12:00–13:00 The Growth of Akkadian Incantations:
Some Examples
Tzvi I. Abusch (Waltham)

13:00–14:00 Lunch

Session 5 (Chair: Stefan M. Maul)

14:00–15:00 The "Exorcist's Manual": Structure,
Language, 'Sitz im Leben'
Eckart Frahm (New Haven)

15:00–16:00 *Ina lumun attalī Sin*: On Evil and Lunar
Eclipses
Francesca Rochberg (Berkeley)

16:00–16:30 Coffee

Session 6 (Chair: Irving L. Finkel)

16:30–17:30 Between Man and the Netherworld.
The Winds as Means of Transport in
Mesopotamian Incantation Texts
Enrique Jiménez (New Haven)

17:30–18:30 A Taxonomy of Gods and Demons
Frans A. M. Wiggermann (Leiden)

19:00 Dinner for all speakers



Friday, 17 April

Session 7 (Chair: Francesca Rochberg)

9:00–10:00 Heilvorschriften zur Lösung eines
'Banns'
Stefan M. Maul (Heidelberg)

10:00–10:30 Coffee

Session 8 (Chair: Eckart Frahm)

10:30–11:30 Jenseits von Gut und Böse – Patterns of
Power Play in Egalkura and Related
Texts
Henry Stadhouders (Utrecht)

11:30–12:30 Evil Helpers: Instrumentalizing Agents
of Evil in Anti-witchcraft Rituals
Daniel Schwemer (Würzburg)

12:30 Lunch