

Literarische Keilschrifttexte aus Assur

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(Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1953.)

The diggings of the Deutsche-Orient-Gesellschaft at Assur (Qual'at Serqat) directed by E. W. Andrae from 1903 to 1914 have brought to light a cuneiform library which, although lacking the significance of that discovered at Nineveh, affords, nevertheless, the best available source for the study of the Assyrian religion.

This new publication adds to the important series of the Deutsche-Orient-Gesellschaft devoted to historic texts (*Keilschrifttexte aus Assur historischen Inhalts*, Volumes I and II, edited, respectively, by Messerschmidt and Schroeder) and to the legal documents (*Keilschrifttexte aus Assur juristischen Inhalts*, edited by E. Ebeling). The epigraphic harvest of Assur, particularly rich in the field of religion, has been given its

proper value thanks to the editor of these documents, E. Ebeling, who, as early as 1919, had published the first part of the series under the title, *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts*. We are indebted to him as well for the first transcription and translation of certain cuneiform tablets which appeared in autography in the religious texts of Assur and was published as an anthology of religious literature in the *Mitteilungen* of the Société Asiatique de Leipzig, in 1918, as "Sources pour la connaissance de la religion babylonienne."

The "literary" anthology published in the collections of the Academy of Berlin is composed of 162 cuneiform texts and represents, actually, a sequel to the two books of religious docu-

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ments of Assur, giving us texts which run all the way from the mythological literature to ritual magic and prayer. From the mythological texts emerge certain additional fragments of the Assur copies of the "poem of creation," which was already known and used by Ebeling in the German translation, *Das babylonische Welterschöpfungsglied* (1921). A broad and penetrating knowledge of the religious literature of Assur had enabled him to publish, in 1931, a choice of texts illustrating the religious beliefs linked to the idea of life and death (*Tod und Leben nach den Vorstellungen der Babylonier*). Thus, for example, to the study devoted to the incantations and rites against specters published in transcription and translation in *Tod und Leben* (pp. 122-56) is added a new series of documents.

Tables 86, 87, and 88 form a heretofore unedited group, and the appearance of No. 88 furnishes us with a clinical picture of seizure by the "vagrant" specter: "If the crown of a man's skull and his temples throb, his ears buzz, the roof of his mouth is dry, he has paralysis, muscular inertia. If his chest hurts, his throat is contracted, the hair of his head stands on end, shudders overwhelm him, if he has desires, and if he does not eat, this man has been seized by a vagrant specter." Most of the symptoms enumerated are also recognized by the *Traité akkadien de diagnostiques et pronostiques médicaux*, published by René Labat, under the heading "hand of the specter." These pathological phenomena are attributed to witchcraft, and the medical aspects envisaged in the occurrence is purely magic. The ritual prescribes the making of a clay figurine

representing the vagrant specter; the incantation, recited by the exorcist, invokes the cosmic gods, Ea, Samas, and Marduk. Those elements which figure in all ritual cleansing are also found: offerings of food and drink and the use of sympathetic magic for the purpose of forcing the hand of the specter to leave the body of the sufferer. The figurine of the specter is treated like a corpse, and the exorcist, having sealed it in a vase, buries the vase in a specific place or throws it into the river.

Text No. 133 is a new document which enriches the dossier of the demoness *haiattu* (literally, the investigator, the spy). Here one learns her lineage—she is the daughter of Ea, god of magic. In the demonological series the investigator, whose quality is most frequently malevolent, is associated with the demon called the "look-out man" (*râbisu*), the "instrument of evil" (*mukîl-reš-lemutti*), etc.

The exorcism of the investigator by the *kusarikku* (the mythical animal installed at the door of the temple of Ea) has not been published. According to the tradition of the Babylonian poem of the creation, Tiamat (in truth, the cosmic womb), "she who created all things," had begotten the monsters "fearless in combat" in order to affront Marduk, the formidable delegate of the young gods. The *kusarikku* belonged, with the foaming wolf, the red dragon, the hydra, the man-fish, to that family of inexorable monsters. Marduk, conqueror-god, after having killed Tiamat, enchained her creatures forever. Since this time monster-demons have been assimilated in the magic tradition to the divinities having the reputation of

averting evil. Actually, certain ritual tablets mention the presence of the conquered demons among the prophylactic figurines buried under the doorstep of the dwelling place. And it is no longer astonishing to find the *kusarikku*, creation of Tiamat, invoked by the exorcist in the incantation against the investigator. The enchained monsters (the red dragon, the hydra, and the *kusarikku*), let it be noted, figure in a beautiful prayer addressed to the "gods of the night."

Other groups of religious texts, such as the conjuring rites, *namburbi*¹ (Nos. 108-29), and the prayers of the "raised hand" (Nos. 39-61), also have their place in this literary collection.

In the Akkadian religious literature the *namburbi* designates particularly the lustral ceremonies which, for the conjurer, take into account "all signs seen on the earth and in the heavens." The

1. Ebeling's study on the *namburbi* appeared in the *Revue d'Assyriologie*, XLVIII, 1 ff., 76 ff., 130 ff.

prophylactic character defines the functions of these ritual practices, which integrate themselves in the daily life of the Babylonian. The performance of these rites calls forth the exercise of all the priest's knowledge, simply to assure the efficacy of the prescribed ceremonies.

The prayers of the "raised hand," named from the gesture which invokes the gods of the heavens, occupies an important place in Babylonian oratory. Ebeling is author of a monograph on this subject which appears in a publication of the Institut de Recherches Orientales.² In that volume he has reassembled the texts of the British Museum, first published by L. King under the title of *Babylonian Magic and Sorcery* (London, 1896), and the tablets of Assur, printed in autography in *Literarische Keilschrifttexte aus Assur*.

2. *Die akkadische Gebetserie "Handerhebung"* ("Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Institut für Orientalforschung," Ver. No. 20 [Berlin, 1953]).