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as ‘on/of the established account,³ orally confirmed,⁴ but this does not illuminate matters further and our transliterations are on shaky ground. This example may serve as a demonstration of the fact that, where philology is concerned, there is not much we may add to what the contributors have achieved in this volume.

To sum up, this book is a testament to the spirit of collaboration characterising the Ur III workshops as referred to by the editors. They, as well as the contributors, but also all other participants of the workshops, are to be thanked for what is an indispensable tool for further research into the Ur III period. The reviewer is looking forward to the future volumes dedicated to these stimulating workshops.

Leiden.

Remco de Maaijer.

N. Heeßel, *Divinatorische Texte II: Opferschau-Omina*. XII + 469 S., 155 Abb. Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 2012 (= KAL 5; WVD OG 139) € 78,-. ISBN 978-3-447-06742-3.

The volume under review consists of *bārūtu* omens from Assur, and because there is no question regarding the excellent quality of philological scholarship exhibited by the volume, the present reviewer prefers to concentrate on important issues raised by the publication of these texts, rather than quibbling with individual readings. The question to be addressed is central to the study of divination in Mesopotamia, namely whether extispicy omens or other genres, including diagnostic omens, can be considered to be ‘religious’ in their orientation. Arguments will partially be based upon several important texts published in this collection of Assur texts, many of which are already known from previous copies by E. Ebeling, but the present volume offers new copies, collations, and text editions reflecting the highest standards of accuracy already seen in all other publications of the Assur Project.

We begin with the very first text in the volume, a large 3-column tablet which is an excerpt from *bārūtu*-omens, which contains the following phrases (ll. 55-58):

If the *mazzāzu* lobe is obliterated (*kabis*), it is the ‘Hand’ of Marduk.

³) *nîĝ-ka ag-ga-a / ka₂-ga ge-na*, with *ka* as a syllabic writing of *ka₂/ka₃*, and the verb *AK* having an *Auslaut -g*, the text having been written by a less than fully competent Akkadian scribe (see Abraham H. Jagersma, *A Descriptive Grammar of Sumerian* (Leiden 2010), p. [31])? As observed by Widell (p. 215), UET 3:37 line 2 indeed looks like a less elaborately written variant of this classification: *nîĝ!-ka ag / ka₂ ge-n[a]*.

⁴) For the grammatical construction, see Jagersma, *A Descriptive Grammar of Sumerian* (Leiden 2010), pp. 236, 443, 475, 601, and 611.

If the top of the *mazzāzu* lobe is obliterated, it is the ‘Hand’ of Papnunanki.

If the middle of the *mazzāzu* lobe is obliterated, it is the ‘Hand’ of Ištar of Babylon, alternatively Ištar of the city.

If the base of the *mazzāzu* lobe is obliterated, it is the ‘Hand’ of Nanāya, alternatively the ‘Hand’ of Dilbat (Venus).

Further along, in the following section of excerpts regarding the ‘path’ on the liver (*padānu*) (ll. ii 9-12): “If the ‘path’ is obliterated (*kabis*), it is the ‘Hand’ of Šamaš. If the top of the ‘path’ is obliterated, it is the ‘Hand’ of Kanisurra. If the middle of the ‘path’ is obliterated, it is the ‘Hand’ of Iqbidamiq. If the base of the ‘path’ is obliterated, it is the ‘Hand’ of Nabû.” A few lines further down (ii 29-31), we find a similar formulation: “If the top of the ‘strong’ (*dannu*) place (of the liver) is obliterated, it is the ‘Hand’ of Tašmetu. If the middle of the ‘strong’ (*dannu*) place (of the liver) is obliterated, it is the ‘Hand’ of Ninkarrak (Gula). If the base of the ‘strong’ (*dannu*) place (of the liver) is obliterated, it is the ‘Hand’ of Sadarnunna.” The exact same pattern repeats itself in the following section referring to the front of the ‘sack’ (*tākaltu*), in ll. 62-64: “If the *šulmu* (a crease on the liver) is obliterated (*kabis*), it is the ‘Hand’ of Iškur (Adad). If the *šulmu* on the right is obliterated, it is the ‘Hand’ of Zababa. If the *šulmu* on the left is obliterated, it is the ‘Hand’ of Enlil.” The same pattern can be found in a second text in this volume, No. 19, a collection of omens referring to the ‘path’ on the liver (rev. ll. 32-33): “If the top of the ‘path’ is obliterated (*kabis*), it is the ‘Hand’ of Kanisurra. If the middle of the ‘path’ is obliterated, it is the ‘Hand’ of Iqbidamiq. If the base of the ‘path’ is obliterated, it is the ‘Hand’ of Nergal.”

The point to notice here is that each of these ‘Hand of a DN’ apodoses is a complete prediction by itself, with no further qualification necessary; the pattern suggests that such apodoses are generally unfavourable. This means that the expression ‘Hand of a DN’ is a prognosis, not a diagnosis. One interesting extract (*nishu*) text in this volume (No. 70) contains a section on the reverse referring to omens resulting from oil on water being ignited by the *bārū*, one result being (rev. 41), “[If] it coils like a snake, it is the ‘Hand’ of the Anunnaki, he will get ill and die;” in fact, most of the smoke omens in this particular context in Text No. 70 rev. 31-42 refer to illness. It would be helpful to know if a divine ‘hand’ might generally point to disease, since the ‘Hand of a DN’ apodosis often occurs in *bārūtu*-omens when the particular part of the liver has been ‘obliterated’ (*kabis*). The association with the organ being ‘obliterated’ and the resulting prediction may not be entirely coincidental, since the verb *ka₂ba₂su*, literally ‘to tread upon,’ suggests that the organ in question had actually been ‘trampled’ (*kabis*), and this same verb often refers in medical contexts to treading accidentally

in unclean water or on something taboo, usually resulting in illness (see for convenience CAD K, 6).

The expression ‘Hand of a DN’ also occurs in *Šumma ālu* omens Tablet XXI (see Heeßel 2007: 30-32 = KAL I No. 7, Freedman 1998: 314-315), referring either to sounds made by a ghost or activities of various birds in a man’s house. The apodoses all refer to the ‘Hand of a DN,’ with an additional prediction in most cases indicating that a member of the household will die (cause not mentioned), or that the house would be dispersed, that the household will experience bad times or evil or incur losses, or acquire a new owner. All of these are common clichés of *bārūtu* and omen literature.¹ None of these ‘Hand of a DN’ designations is particularly diagnostic, since the ‘hand’ of a god cannot be matched up with any specific result, but these phrases are nevertheless part of the fabric of omens.

These expressions also have a history. Although OB references to ‘Hand of a DN’ are not plentiful, they do occasionally occur (see Jeyes 1989: 42, also 98, 109); Jeyes highlights themes in OB omens referring specifically to the patient who is afflicted by an oath, taboo, witchcraft, or divine anger (*ibid.* 42). The term also occurs in oil omens, cf. Pettinato 1966: i 12 (No. 1,1: *a-na ma-ar-ši-im qá-ti i-lu-tim qá-tum da-an-na-[at]*, “for a patient, hand of divinity – the hand is severe”). In a group of MB *Šumma ālu*-type omens from Southern Mesopotamia, this motif is specifically associated with illness: “If (a man) is stricken in the head, it is the Hand of Bēlet-ilī. If a (man) is stricken in the rear, it is the Hand of Šamaš, etc.” (George 2013: 98-99). The *Šumma-ālu*-like text continues with the ‘Hand’ of Šin being associated with being stricken in the eye, the ‘Hand’ of Adad with the spleen, the ‘Hand’ of Ninšubur with the belly (*libbum*), the ‘Hand’ of Timua with the rectum, and the ‘Hand’ of Gemini with the foot.

The question is what this expression means within the context of omens and whether it is to be interpreted literally to imply the personal interference of a god into daily affairs of men and women. As Francesca Rochberg remarks, “All the systems of divination preserved in the cuneiform omen corpora reflect a belief in the involvements of gods in the physical natural as well as in the human social worlds” (2004: 45). This is certainly the view of earlier scholars who have tried to interpret the ‘Hand of a DN’ notation within diagnostic omens, as succinctly summarised by Nils Heeßel in a previous study; the

¹ In rare instances the ‘Hand of a DN’ results in a good omen (usually: NINDA *mat-qá ik-kal*, “he will consume ‘sweet’ food,” cf. *Šumma ālu*, Tablet XXI: 98, 102 = Freedman 1998: 314), but it is possible that we are not interpreting such omens correctly, since *matqu* “sweet” is a term which can also describe skin ailments and lice, hence “sticky”; see CAD M/1, 413. Moreover, according to KADP 2 vi 21', *Ú ša mu-šu = šam-mu mat-qu*, “the drug against discharge is ‘sweet’ plant,” suggesting that the reason for eating this plant is for treatment rather than pleasure.

‘hand’ is thought to refer to divine punishment and disease which is of special interest to a god (Heeßel 2007b: 121). Robert Biggs, in his *Reallexikon* article on ‘medicine’, suggests that the ‘hands’ diagnosis within the *Diagnostic Handbook* could have hinted at which relevant god or goddess should be approached in prayer (Biggs 1990: 624). Barbara Böck rightly points to the lack of evidence of the divine ‘hand’ as an indicator of the supernatural cause of disease, although she herself appears to subscribe to Gula’s personal role in healing (Böck 2015: 47). Nils Heeßel, in his edition of the *Diagnostic Handbook*, refers to a reference in DINGIR.ŠÁ.DAB.BA incantations in which the suppliant declares to his personal god, “Your hand is terrible, I have experienced your punishment” (Lambert 1974: 274, 33, Heeßel 2000: 84); a similar sentiment occurs in the first line of *Ludlul*, Tablet III. Karel van der Toorn hedges his bets by suggesting that the expression ‘Hand of a DN’ was intended to “localize the source of the signs” rather than define the “nature or cause of the disease,” but he rejects the idea that the ‘hand’ represents divine punishment (van der Toorn 1985: 78).

Finally, Marten Stol noted important characteristics of the ‘hands’ which others have missed, that ‘hands’ of female deities (e.g., Ištar) tend to relate to the left-hand side of the patient’s body while ‘hands’ of male deities (e.g., Šamaš or Šulpa’ea) to the right-hand side, but he concludes that all this data amounts to an elaborate ‘theology’, and even when ‘hands’ refer to spirits or supernatural beings acting upon the human body, this reflects the idea that “major gods work through these intermediary Augenblicksgötter” (Stol 1993: 45-46). However, in this same context Stol also points to the expression *šēdu šanē* (“demon, deputy of god NN”), which occurs in scholastic *Šammu šikinšu* texts describing the nature of plants, e.g., ŠU DINGIR *ga-aš-ri* ^dALAD *šá-né-e* ^dNergal, “hand of the powerful god, deputy spirit of Nergal” (cf. Stadhouders 2011: 42, 8'). H. Stadhouders translates *šēdu* in this context as “power”, which is moving in the right direction towards de-theologising these expressions in Babylonian scholastic circles. The central idea is that the plants described in *Šammu šikinšu* act as a divine ‘deputy’ (*šanū*) for divinities, who no longer need to be factored into healing processes, since it is the characteristics of the plants which react against a disease, and not a god. This approach accords well with the third century BCE Alexandrian physician-scholar Herophilus, who referred to drugs (*pharmaka*) as ‘hands of the gods’ (von Staden 1998: 417-418). As further supporting evidence, one *Šammu šikinšu* text from Sultantepe gives the plant name as *baltu* “thorn”, followed by the phrase, *ana ŠU x x A.RÁ šá-nim* ^dMES, (Stadhouders 2011: 7, 25), a clever pun on Sum. /a-rá,/ known from lexical texts as equivalent both to *šēdu* “spirit” (PSD A/1, 152) and to *arū* “mathematics”. We would therefore translate the phrase as, “for the Hand of (DN) to be reckoned, depu-

ty of Marduk,” meaning that the divine ‘hand’ is now a ‘calculation’ (derived from symptoms), delegating for the personal role of Marduk.

Abraham Winitzer has taken up the baton to argue in favour of personal divine intervention in OB divination, based to a large extent on oil omens, but he works very hard to make a case based upon what he acknowledges to be somewhat scanty evidence (Winitzer 2010: 188). Francesca Rochberg concurs when she concedes that the “laconic nature of omen texts places limitations on the use of divination literature as evidence for how ... they understood the gods to relate to the celestial omens, and by extension to the physical world” (Rochberg 2004: 166-167). In fact, a superficial survey of divination literature in general yields a surprising result: there are relatively few explicit expressions which could be described as directed towards divinities or their roles within omen apodoses, since most omens move directly from the omen to the associated prediction without invoking divine interest or involvement in the process. One might well retort that extispicy is really a divine ‘verdict’ (*purussû*), as if the diviner were approaching a divine court (see Rochberg 2004: 53), and the *ikrib* prayer and diviner’s ritual which invoke the attending gods reinforce this view of gods being present within the decision-making metaphor. There are problems with this approach. One is that within the omens themselves, while the role of gods is implicitly understood, explicit expressions are infrequent over the entire span of omen literature. As the clearest example, the divine ‘hand’ occurs most frequently in the *Diagnostic Handbook*, reflecting the fact that this work essentially follows the patterns and layout of omen literature in general. Otherwise, this idiom occurs sporadically within *bārûtu* (as in the first text within the present volume under review), and in *Šumma ālu* omens dealing with the appearance of a cadaver or birds (Tablet XXI) or scorpions (Tablet XXXI) in the house, but does not occur in *Šumma izbu* omens. The ‘hands’ also show up occasionally in physiognomic omens derived from *kittabru*-skin lesions, a tablet which makes more than its share of pious remarks about gods in the apodoses (see Böck 2000: 212-213, 216-217).²

The second problem with taking a religious view of divination is that it ignores some characteristic features of the process of predictions. As divination specialists have pointed out, extispicy (and other forms of divination) became highly developed technologies, beginning in the OB period, and divination uncovered “meaning derived from a cosmic network of interrelations” (see Koch-Westenholz 2000: 12), which could only be worked out through mathematical models (see *ibid.* 42-43 and Maul 2013: 90-94). So although extispicy represented the most complex form of divination prior to later

astrology, it did not represent a straightforward system of communication with the divine through simple yes or no answers (see Heeßel 2010: 163-164). This means that the ‘Hand of a DN’ may also represent something other than an indication of the personal involvement of a god or demon within human affairs, often associated with illness.

Over time, the system of extispicy becomes increasingly complex, with more exact calculations of the *adannu* or critical period during which the ominous predictions would be valid (see Heeßel 2010 for the latest treatment of *adannu* reckonings). These are to be found in a group of commentaries known as *multābiltu* (‘calculation’), which probably developed out of a genre of esoteric explanatory texts known as *niširti bārûti*, “secrets of extispicy” (see Koch 2005: 5-72). A selection of such texts appear as Nos. 64-77 in the present volume under review. In these types of esoteric omen commentaries, the idea was that the *bārû* could focus the time span of the prediction as accurately as possible, on mathematical grounds, based on the characteristics of the ‘finger’, a part of the lobe of the liver. In No. 64 of the present volume, the text reads (p. 214):

If the top of the left surface of the ‘finger’ is notched once, its critical period is 6 days, you will answer thus for many (queries): “Within 6 days you will subdue an enemy city, you will [overthrow] an enemy in combat, the heavens will not rain, the sick will die.”

If the middle of the left surface of the ‘finger’ is notched once, its critical period is 9 days.

If the base of the left surface of the ‘finger’ is notched once, its critical period is 12 days.

If the top of the left surface of the ‘finger’ is notched twice, its critical period is 15 days.

If the middle of the left surface of the ‘finger’ is notched twice, its critical period is 18 days.

If the base of the left surface of the ‘finger’ is notched twice, its critical period is 21 days.

If the top of the left surface of the ‘finger’ is notched thrice, its critical period is 24 days.

Among favourable (omens) – unfavourable, among unfavourable omens – favourable.

This text is a rather simplified version of an algorithm which was later applied to extispicy, in which a numerical factor was used to determine the ‘critical period’ of a day, month, or year for the validity of the omens (Heeßel 2010: 166-167). The point is that divination in this highly complex form was not simply a matter of communication with the divine, but an elaborate *technē* for determining future events by reading clues implicitly attributed to divine intentions. The fact that unfavourable omens could be potentially negated through equally elaborate *nam-burbî* rituals meant that the system involved techniques for manipulating divine will, much in the same way that

²) This may not be coincidence, since ‘hands’ of gods tend to appear often with *simmu*-disease skin conditions (see below).

royal demands could be mitigated through the labyrinth of bureaucracy. Moreover, the entire courtroom and verdict metaphors for divination create their own specific mechanisms for establishing the authority and credibility of omen predictions, analogous to the use of the oath and adjurations employed in incantations to lend juridical power to measures taken against demons. These are practical and psychologically effective tools rather than theological catechism. In effect, the increasing elaboration of the *technē* in the first millennium makes it more likely that the apparatus of divination was the *primary* focus in the enterprise, with the concept of divine communication lurking in the background; ‘religious’ considerations were *selbstverständlich* and in fact secondary. To assume, under these circumstances, that the ‘Hand of a DN’ represented the personal wishes or interests of a deity or demon underestimates the complexities of the entire system of divination.

Now let us turn to diagnostic omens from the *Diagnostic Handbook*, which is replete with references to ‘Hand of a DN.’ What is striking is that OB diagnostic omens prefer the expression *šibit* DN, as can be seen from a fragment from Southern Mesopotamia, probably coming from the same archive as the *Šumma ālu*-type omens mentioned above. Here we find references to Ì.DAB (= *šibit*) *li-[i-i-im]* / ^d[UT]U / GEDIM.MA / *ha-wi-i-tum*, “seizure by Lilû, Šamaš, a ghost, or a sand-fly” (George 2013: 88). A similar type of reference to *šibit* DINGIR.MAH / Išhara occurs in OB oil omens (Pettinato 1966: II 15) as well as a *qá-ti ma-al-ki ù e-ṭe₄-em-mi-im*, “hand of ... and a ghost” (*ibid.* II 64). The only reference in the OB precursor of the *Diagnostic Handbook* to a ‘hand’ is *qá-at ki-iš-pi* ‘hand of spells’ (*AfO* 49, 2001-2: 74), which illustrates that the ‘hand’ metaphor references other types of agencies in the OB period, a phenomenon also known from later diagnostic omens (see Heeßel 2007b: 121). In other words, the ‘hand’ can imply something other than personal involvement of a deity or demon, and this may be the case for other instances where a ‘Hand of a DN’ is mentioned.

Within the *Diagnostic Handbook*, the ‘Hand of a DN’ notations were popular and frequent, as already noted by Labat (1951: xxii-xxiv). The point about the *Diagnostic Handbook* is that its prognoses are essentially a form of divination applied to medical signs (symptoms), and as such it employs the same format and methods as other kinds of divination, such as *Šumma ālu*. In marked contrast to therapeutic texts, the frequency of the expression ‘Hand of a DN’ within diagnostic omens reflects the divinatory rather than medical character of these texts. The methods employed in the *Diagnostic Handbook* are *not* the same as those in therapeutic medical prescriptions, which usually avoid the ‘Hand of a DN’ label as well as prognoses. However, some ‘hand’ entries in the *Diagnostic Handbook* look suspiciously personal, but this

does not mean that the god determines the course of the illness. It is useful to remind ourselves that the *Diagnostic Handbook* is not a collection of individual case histories but was constructed from observations of countless patients showing similar patterns of symptoms, and any divine or demonic ‘hand’ would refer to the *disease*, not the patient; any divine interest would be directed towards disease, not the anonymous patient or rather patients. It is an easy step to make, therefore, to assume that any disease designation associated with a particular divinity or demon would soon become a label for a disease, rather than an expression of piety.

Let us examine some individual examples from the *Diagnostic Handbook* which might argue against our interpretation and seem to point to personal divine intervention in human affairs. Tablet XVIII describes symptoms of fever, and l. 16 diagnoses the “‘Hand’ of Ninurta because of another man’s wife” (Heeßel 2000: 218, Scurlock 2014: 173), followed by the “‘Hand’ of Ištar because of a wish” (l. 29), with the following line noting the “‘Hand’ of Ištar, it is the same for a man or woman.” In Tablet XV (dealing with urinary tract symptoms), l. 108 attributes the person’s problems to ‘venereal disease’ (GIG *na-a-ki*) and to the ‘Hand of his god / his goddess,’ while l. 110 attributes his swollen penis and testicles to the fact that “Venus (Dilbat) has reached him in his bed” (Scurlock 2014: 123). Not all such explanatory phrases refer to sex, since another repeated diagnosis refers to the “Hand of Šamaš because of silver of the shrine” (Scurlock 2014: 93:5), presumably referring to the misappropriation of sacred funds. These nevertheless point to a common pattern of moral judgments being associated with the ‘Hand of a DN,’ which may suggest that an infraction of a taboo is somehow related to the aetiology of disease associated with the ‘hand’ of a god. This is very different from a god’s personal involvement, however.

The key to solving this conundrum is a tablet of *Simmu šikinšu* essentially explaining the nature of skin lesions, with descriptive terms for both symptoms and skin diseases. The tablet also appears to have served as Tablet XXXIII of the *Diagnostic Handbook* (see Heeßel 2000: 353-374 and 2007b: 128) and is known from two sources, a fragment in LA script (CT 51, 51) and a LB tablet from Uruk (SBTU 4, 152); the latter manuscript preserves a table as an appendix to the text, identifying the ‘hands’ of various gods with specific disease names (see Heeßel 2000: 357-358; Scurlock 2014: 235 omitted the tabular format). In this table the technical disease names described in *Simmu šikinšu* are in the left-hand columns, while the ‘Hand of a DN’ designations are on the right (‘Hand’ of Gula, Ninurta, Marduk, Šamaš, Ištar, Šin, Nergal, and Šulpa’ea). The tabular format breaks down at the end of the text, with symptoms rather than technical nosological terms being associated with the ‘hands’ of gods, but the idea is similar.

<i>sa-ma-na</i>	[ŠU] ^d <i>gu-la</i>	[a]-š <i>u-ú</i>	ŠU ^d [<i>gu-la</i>]
<i>ši-i-tu</i> ₄	[ŠU] ^d <i>gu-la</i>	x [...]	ŠU ^d [<i>gu-la</i>]
<i>šar-ri-šu</i>	ŠU ^d <i>gu-la</i>	š[<i>a-da-n</i>]u	ŠU ^d <i>gu-[la]</i>
<i>ši-in-na-ah-ti-ri</i>	ŠU ^d <i>gu-la</i>	<i>u š[a-da-n]u</i>	ŠU ^d <i>n[in-urta]</i>
<i>ta-kal-tu</i> ₄	ŠU ^d <i>nin-urta</i>	<i>ah-h[a-z]u</i>	ŠU ^d X[XX]
<i>di-ik-šú</i>	ŠU ^d <i>marduk</i>	<i>u [a-mur-r]i-qá-nu</i>	ŠU ^d [...]
ʾKIR ₄ .HABʾ <i>uh-hi-iz</i>	ŠU ^d <i>marduk</i>	<i>um-me-di</i>	ŠU ^d é-ʾaʾ
[...]	ŠU ^d Šamaš	<i>gir-giš-šu</i> ₁₄	ŠU ^d Šamaš
[...]	ŠU ^d Šamaš	<i>ek-ket-tu</i> ₄	ŠU ^d Šamaš
[...]	ŠU ^d Šamaš	<i>qu-lep-tu</i> ₄	ŠU ^d Šamaš
[...]	ŠU ^d Šamaš	Û.BU.BU.U[L] x x	ŠU ^d Šamaš
[...]	ŠU ^d <i>iš-tar</i> TAG- <i>it</i> NAM.TAR NU TI- <i>uṭ</i> Û.BU.B[U.U]L x	GÌR 150-šú <i>ih</i> -[...]	ŠU ^d <i>iš-tar</i> KI.MIN
[...]	ŠU ^d Šamaš	<i>a-na</i> EGIR-šú <i>ih</i> -[<i>tí</i> ^(?)]	ŠU ^d [ZU]E[N]
[...]	ŠU ^d Šîn	<i>bu-up-pa-ni-šú i[m-qt]</i>	[Š]U ^d [...]
[...] x	ŠU ^d <i>iš-tar</i>	UZU.MEŠ-šú ʾúʾ- <i>[ta-as-sal]</i>	[Š]U [...]
[...] <i>u ŠÀ.MEŠ-šú it-te-nen-bi-tu</i>		<i>i-šah-hu-hu</i>	[Š]U [...]
[...] UZU.MEŠ-šú		<i>la i-šal-lal</i>	Š[U ^d šul]- <i>pa-è-a</i>
[...] x AN.TA GU ₇ .MEŠ-šú- <i>ma</i>		<i>la i-šal-lal</i>	Š[U ^d i]š- <i>tar</i>
[...] AN.TA GU ₇ .MEŠ-šú- <i>ma</i>		<i>uk-ku-up</i>	[ŠU ^d ...]
[...] x GIG-ʾ <i>su</i> ʾ		<i>a-mur-ri-qa-nu</i> HI [...]	[ŠU ^d ...]
[...] x TI [Z]I			

<i>samana</i> -disease	= ‘Hand’ of Gula	<i>ašû</i> disease	= ‘Hand’ of Gula
<i>šitu</i> -disease	= ‘Hand’ of Gula	...	= ‘Hand’ of Gula
<i>šarrišu</i> -disease	= ‘Hand’ of Gula	<i>šadânu</i> disease	= ‘Hand’ of Gula
<i>šinnahtiru</i> -disease	= ‘Hand’ of Gula	or <i>šadânu</i> disease	= ‘Hand’ of Ninurta
<i>tākaltu</i> -disease	= ‘Hand’ of Ninurta	jaundice	= ‘Hand’ of Šîn
<i>dikšu</i>	= ‘Hand’ of Marduk	or [jau]ndice	= ‘Hand’ of ...
<i>bušaʾnu</i> -...	= ‘Hand’ of Marduk	<i>ummedu</i> sores	= ‘Hand’ of Ea
...	= ‘Hand’ of Šamaš	<i>girgiššu</i> sores	= ‘Hand’ of Šamaš
...	= ‘Hand’ of Šamaš	<i>ekketu</i> sores	= ‘Hand’ of Šamaš
...	= ‘Hand’ of Šamaš	<i>quleptu</i> sores	= ‘Hand’ of Šamaš
...	= ‘Hand’ of Šamaš	... <i>bubuʾtu</i> boils	= ‘Hand’ of Šamaš
...	= ‘Hand’ of Ištar	‘attack of fate (Namtar), he will	
...		not live’, ... <i>bubuʾtu</i> boils	= ‘Hand’ of Šîn, <i>ditto</i>
...	= ‘Hand’ of Šamaš	his left foot was [faulty ^(?)]	= ‘Hand’ of Ištar
...	= ‘Hand’ of Šîn	behind his back was [faulty ^(?)]	= ‘Hand’ of Šîn
...	= ‘Hand’ of Ištar	he fell on his face	= ‘Hand’ of [...]
... and his innards are colicky, -		his flesh is swollen	= ‘Hand’ of [...]
... his flesh has		wasted away	= ‘Hand’ of [...]
... constantly hurts him above and		he cannot sleep	= ‘Hand’ of Sulpaʾea
... constantly hurts him above and		he cannot sleep	= ‘Hand’ of Ištar
... his illness		approaches	= [‘Hand’ of ...]
[...] ...		jaundice ... [...]	= [‘Hand’ of ...]

This table is intended to address the essential problem that the ‘Hand of a DN’ was not a very useful term for disease diagnosis because it was not specific enough. As one can see from the table, the terms for ‘hand’ of a particular god could correspond to several different diseases, which meant that the expression was too vague to be useful, or different divine hands could correspond to a set of symptoms, also too vague. The ‘Hand’ of Gula could theoretically refer to no less than seven different diseases, the ‘Hand’ of her spouse Ninurta corresponds to two diseases, Marduk’s ‘Hand’ to two diseases, the

‘Hand’ of Šamaš to nine diseases, Šîn to two diseases, and Ištar’s ‘hand’ to four diseases or symptoms. The solution was to assign more abstract and descriptive labels to diseases, as in the left-hand columns of the table. This kind of abstraction is not entirely new, as in the case of jaundice, which was always known by two names: one name was *ahhazu*, associated with a demon and infractions of taboos, and the second was the more generic term *amurriqānu*, which conveyed the yellowish colour symptomatic of this disease; both terms appear in *Simmu šikinšu*. Similarly, many disease names are known from

OB incantations (see Wasserman 2007), but these were not associated with specific gods.

The pattern demonstrated in this *Simmu šikinšu* table is clear, namely to systematise diagnostic terms by replacing traditional terms with technical ones, and a model for the methodology of the *Simmu šikinšu* table can be found in plant lists, as the following example will show (*Uruanna* III 5-6):

Ú *šumuttu*(SUMUN.DAR) = AŠ *ze-e* LÚ, *šumuttu* = human faeces

Ú *šu-mut-tu*₄ = AŠ *hulû*(pěš.sila.gaz) *šá api*(^{GIS}GI), *šumuttu* = reed bed rodent

combined with (*Uruanna* I 403 = KADP 2 ii 15):

Ú MIN (*illuru arqu*) = Ú *šu-mut-tú* = *šam-mu na-ah-šá-ti* fresh *illuru* = *šumuttu* = haemorrhage drug

According to these equations, if one encounters a reference to human faeces or a *hulû*-rodent in a medical recipe, this is a *Deckname*. The actual ingredient to be employed is *šumuttu*, a drug useful against haemorrhages, but *šumuttu* can also be replaced by the green *illuru*-plant (which is normally red). Like commentaries or lexical texts, which usually interpret the left-hand columns with synonyms on the right, in these cases the word on the left is primary, as with the table of symptom and disease names in *Simmu šikinšu* discussed above; the ‘hands’ of gods in *simmu*-disease texts were thus to be understood as labels for various dermatological conditions.

Further evidence for technical understanding of the ‘hand’ of a divinity occurs in a Late Babylonian commentary (BRM 4 32) on an Uruk medical text dealing with fumigation (TCL 6 34) which opens as follows: [DIŠ AN.T]A.ŠUB.BA ⁴LUGAL.ÛR.RA ŠU.DINGIR.RA ŠU ⁴INNIN.NA [*ana*] LÚ GÁL-ši, “if ‘falling-sickness,’ epilepsy, ‘Hand’ of the God-disease or ‘Hand’ of the Goddess-disease befall a man.”³ The commentary on this passage identifies these diseases in clear nosological terms. ‘Falling-sickness’ is explained by “the patient keeps choking and spitting up phlegm,” while this same disease and ‘epilepsy’ are indicated when the patient’s “right or left eye squints.” ‘Hand of the God’-disease can be detected when the patient “curses the gods, blasphemes, or smashes whatever he finds.” This disease is also to be identified with ‘Hand’ of the goddess-disease, indicated by the patient having cramps, ‘heartache’, and is constantly forgetting his words (see Scurlock 2014: 341 and Geller 2010: 168-169). There is nothing theological in these explanations.

³ It should be noted that these same diseases occur within a contemporary Uruk tablet (SBTU I 43), which associates them with the ‘heart’, probably indicating cognitive faculties.

It should be stressed that although the ‘Hand of a DN’ occurs only exceptionally within medical prescriptions, some cases can be found, as in the following example (BAM 584 ii 25'-27'):

U.BU.BU.UL SA₂ *ina* KUŠ NA GÁL-ši A ša [...]

ŠU ⁴XXX NAM.ÉRIM DAB-*su* ŠU ⁴INNIN [...]

qadūt šikāni (IM.GŪ.EN.NA) LAG.A.ŠĀ.GA GAZ

ina A GAZI[^{SAR} *tara-bak* ...]

A red boil is on a man’s skin, the fluid of [...],

(it is) the ‘Hand’ of Sîn, (or) a curse has seized him, (it is) the ‘Hand’ of Ištar [...]

crush river sediment (*qadūt šikāni*) and field-clod and soak (them) in *kasû*-juice [...].

A similar recipe for boils in this text blames the condition on the ‘Hand’ of Šamaš, and in fact the same skin diseases and divine ‘hands’ appear in the *Simmu šikinšu* tablet discussed above, which may not be entirely coincidental. It may be that an explanatory text such as *Simmu šikinšu* was required precisely because ‘hand’ designations continued to be employed for dermatological conditions. The ‘Hand’ of a DN terminology can also be found exceptionally in an eye-disease text (BAM 516 ii 19-23), perhaps because of a peculiarity: ‘night blindness’ (*sil-lurmû*) was written poetically as *Sîn-lurmâ* (⁴XXX-*lu-ur-ma-a*), perhaps meaning “Sîn has indeed slackened,” a suitable metaphor for dim vision. Obviously some therapeutic recipes occasionally still employed traditional terminology for diseases as being associated with particular gods.

One other common exception to the rule is the expression ‘Hand of a ghost,’ which occurs numerous times within therapeutic texts and incantations as well as in the *Diagnostic Handbook* and omens in general. The reason for the popularity of this expression may be because of the aetiology of diseases associated with a ghost who whispers into the patient’s ear, thus causing mental and certain kinds of physical illness. Whispering into the ear is interesting as a point of comparison with omen procedures, since oracular questions also have to be whispered into the ear of the extispicy-sheep before it is slaughtered, in order to get an answer through the elaborate calculations of *bārûtu*. In any case, the ‘Hand of the ghost’ usually represents a classification of disease rather than an identifiable individual, and the ‘Hand of the ghost’ label is associated with specific symptoms rather than disease in general (see Scurlock 2006: 19 for a useful survey of ghost-related illnesses). Nevertheless, the evidence can be ambiguous and contradictory, as for instance in one therapeutic text which states that the ‘Hand of the ghost’ turns into *antašubbû*-disease (“fallen-sickness”) (Scurlock 2006: 16), which can only mean that the ghostly ‘hand’ is a disease, since there is substantial evidence in recipes for one disease to ‘turn’ into another. On the other

hand, the very same text identifies a ‘murderous’ ghost or a ‘family’ ghost or a ‘roving’ ghost (*ibid.* 16-17); it is possible, however, that specific designations of personal ghosts were merely a device to establish greater rapport with the patient.

The inference from these various arguments is that *Simmu šikinšu* is for diagnosis what *multābiltu* is for extispicy, both being models of complex systematic methodologies of predictive thinking being developed in first millennium academic circles. However, we often evaluate the intellectual status of Babylonian thinking in relation to Greek science, and the same yardstick has been applied to divination. Francesca Rochberg has concluded along these lines that the presence of gods within Babylonian celestial divination “has further significance in placing the Babylonian intellectual tradition in contrastive relation to later Greco-Roman divination and astrology” (Rochberg 2004: 186). This statement is somewhat unfair both to Babylonians and Greeks, since it assumes a religious orientation in Babylonian scholarship superseded by a mode of secular thinking among Greeks. Greco-Roman diviners had similar implicit assumptions regarding the roles of gods within their own divinatory systems, namely that gods were behind the driver’s wheel. Nevertheless, Greeks had as many differences of opinion and points of view as did inhabitants of Mesopotamia, and there were those who preferred to emphasise the roles of divinities. One famous passage within the Hippocratic treatise on the Sacred Disease has the following comment about how some practitioners choose to interpret disease symptoms:

They make a different god responsible for each of the different forms of the complaint. If the sufferer acts like a goat, and if he roars, or has convulsions involving the right side, they say the Mother of the Gods is responsible. If he utters a higher-pitched and louder cry, they say he is like a horse and blame Poseidon. If the sufferer should be incontinent of faeces, as sometimes happens under the stress of an attack, Enodia is the name. If the stools are more frequent and thin like those of birds, it is Apollo Nomius; if he foam at the mouth and kick out with his feet, Ares is to blame. If he suffers at night from fear and panic, from attacks of insanity, or if he jumps out of bed and runs outside, they talk of attacks of Hecate and the assaults of the Heroes. (Chadwick and Mann 1983: 239-240) *apud* G. Lloyd (ed.) *Hippocratic Writings* (Penguin, Harmondsworth)

In each of these cases, one could adapt the expression to read ‘Hand of the Mother of Gods’ (like *Bēlet-ilī*), the ‘Hand of Enodia’, ‘Hand of Poseidon’, etc., and end up with a remarkable similar passage to what we find in the *Diagnostic Handbook*. However, the point of this Hippocratic treatise was not to question whether gods can cause

disease or to debunk religion, but rather to challenge the associations between specific types of symptoms and specific gods, since such assumptions were regarded as having no evidential basis which could be applied to correct diagnoses or treatments. Similarly, the substitution of traditional designations of diseases by more technical ones is the aim of the *Simmu šikinšu* table cited above.

The conclusion which follows from tracking ‘Hand of a DN’ designations within divination literature challenges some common assumptions about the ‘religious’ basis of predictions based upon omens, particularly in the first millennium BCE. The primary evidence for this expression is scattered and even inconsistent, but there is no clear distinction between provoked and unprovoked omens. The ‘hands’ of gods, demons, and even magical practices so far appear here-and-there in extispicy, oil omens, mostly in two tablets of *Šumma ālu* (XXI and XXXI), medical diagnostic omens, and very occasionally in physiognomic omens. It was clearly taken for granted that the gods were behind this system, but by the first millennium BCE, the process of recording and interpreting omens had become extremely technical and even mechanical, to the extent that the emphasis was upon correct procedure in determining the results rather than pious statements about divine intervention. The Diviner’s Manual, for instance, never mentions gods, but is concerned with getting things right (Oppenheim 1974). It is likely, however, that the ‘Hand of a DN’ expression was a traditional relic from older periods, perhaps even associated in OB omens with illness (as suggested independently by both Jeyes 1989 and Pettinato 1966), and the expression ‘Hand of a DN’ continued to be used in later periods, but mostly as a diagnostic label for illnesses.

The pattern that emerges from this evidence is consistent for divination in general as well as for diagnostic omens applied to medical treatments. Both *multābiltu*-commentaries and *Simmu šikinšu* represent scholastic reassessments and refinements of traditional approaches to *episteme*, with both aiming for greater precision and conceptual abstraction. The omen commentaries present a more exact mechanism for determining the periods of validity of predictions, without reference to gods, while *Simmu šikinšu* attempts to systematise disease labels, also without reference to gods. It is not novelty that is significant here, but rather that first-millennium academic texts show tendencies towards systematic precision and abstraction in applying systems of prediction, and these are the hallmarks of scientific thinking.

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A. Heller, *Das Babylonien der Spätzeit (7.-4. Jh.) in den klassischen und keilschriftlichen Quellen*. 557 S. Berlin, Verlag Antike, 2010 (= *Oikumene – Studien zur Weltgeschichte* 7). € 89,90. ISBN 978-3-938032-38-1.

Eine umfassende Darstellung der politischen Geschichte Babyloniens im ersten vorchristlichen Jahrtausend ist immer noch ein *pium desiderium* der Geschichtsforschung. Es ist daher grundsätzlich zu begrüßen, daß nun mit André Hellers überarbeiteter Erlanger Dissertation von 2006 ein Versuch vorliegt, unter Berücksichtigung sämtlicher zur Verfügung stehender Quellengattungen „einige Phänomene der Spätzeit näher zu untersuchen und neue Lösungen anzubieten“ (S. 15). Der Ansatz, die Berichte griechischer und römischer Historiographen synoptisch mit der altorientalischen Überlieferung zu betrachten, hat schließlich in den letzten Jahrzehnten beeindruckende Ergebnisse hervorgebracht; man denke hierbei an das reiche Œuvre von Historikern aus dem Kreis der Achaemenid History-Workshops wie P. Briant, A. Kuhrt oder R. van der Spek. Die vorliegende Arbeit ist dabei durchaus lobenswert in ihrem Bemühen, einen sehr detaillierten Überblick über wichtige Aspekte der babylonischen Geschichte im Zeitraum zwischen 626 und 331 v. Chr. darzubringen. Darüber hinaus werden auch Erkenntnisfortschritte in der zeitgenössischen Forschung nachgezeichnet. Die große Menge an verwendeten Primärquellen und Sekundärliteratur (siehe die Bibliographie S. 451-509) läßt dabei auf beträchtlichen Arbeitsaufwand schließen. Nach einer kurzen Einleitung beginnt das Buch mit einer sehr ausführlichen Darstellung der archäologischen und literarischen Zeugnisse; ein Überblick über die Gesellschaftsstruktur Babyloniens geht dem Hauptteil des Buches – einer chronologisch angeordneten Besprechung der Geschichte Babyloniens im neuassyrischen und neubabylonischen Reich (Kapitel IV), während der Achämenidenherrschaft (Kapitel V) sowie unter Alexander dem Großen (Kapitel VI) – voraus.

Leider ist zu konstatieren, daß es sich bei dem vorliegenden Buch um eine äußerst unbefriedigende Arbeit handle. Hierfür sind vor allem zwei miteinander verbundene Gründe zu nennen, auf die im Folgenden kurz eingegangen werden soll. An erster Stelle ist die doch recht große Anzahl an Ungenauigkeiten und Fehlern zu nennen (siehe hierzu auch die Detailbemerkungen), die zumeist durch genauere Auseinandersetzung mit der verwendeten Sekundärliteratur vermeidbar gewesen wären. So sind zum Beispiel im Quellenüberblick Hellers Ausführungen zu den Astronomischen Tagebüchern durchaus problematisch: Es ist nicht richtig, daß auf den Tafeln „jeweils Zeiträume von vier oder sechs Monaten aufgezeichnet“ (S. 82) worden seien. Dies mag wohl bei einem nicht unbeträchtlichen Teil der Tagebücher der Fall sein, doch zeichnet sich diese Textgattung durch ein sehr breites Spektrum an beobachteten Zeiträumen aus: die Länge