

BERND JANOWSKI and GERNOT WILHELM (eds):

*Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments, Neue Folge Band 4. Omina, Orakel, Ritual und Beschwörungen.*

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TUAT NF 4 is an anthology of German translations of ancient Near Eastern texts that have been broadly considered “magical” because they negotiate the boundary between mankind and the supernatural: oracular and prophetic texts that seek to determine or reveal the future intentions of divine powers, rituals and incantations that, as *agenda* and *dicenda*, aim jointly to influence those powers in mankind’s favour. Texts of these genres were included in three fascicles of TUAT (vol. 2 parts 1–3) but, given the large quantity of such compositions in ancient Near Eastern languages and the increase in knowledge over the last quarter of a century, it is entirely appropriate that the extension of the series should make space for a further selection.

Texts from ancient Mesopotamia are given precedence, as in previous volumes, and again provide the larger part of the corpus (pp. 1–186). The volume begins with third-millennium incantations, which have been much elucidated in studies that postdate the original TUAT. The selected texts are mostly spells against disease but including an early example of a medical therapy or “ritual” (translated by Hans Neumann). Omen compendia, the chief product of Babylonian divination science, form a vast corpus of material, from which Rosel Pientka makes a judicious selection to complement that in TUAT. The omens are accompanied by related academic texts of ritual and commentary, as well as by reports of individual acts of divination. A selection of prophetic messages and reports of prophecy from the second and first millennia follows (also Pientka). Karl Hecker translates a selection of incantations and rituals – cultic as well as exorcistic – of the same period, to which Tzvi Abusch and Daniel Schwemer add their translation of the anti-witchcraft series *Maqlû*, the product of an unrivalled knowledge of the primary sources.

Hittite rituals (pp. 187–229) are represented by examples from festival and domestic contexts (Jörg Klinger, Jared L. Miller). Other ritual and incantation texts in cuneiform come from Syrian sites (pp. 231–57): Emar on the Euphrates (Schwemer) and Ugarit on the Mediterranean coast (Herbert Niehr). Egyptian magic has long held Western cultures fascinated in its grip. Collected here is a substantial anthology (pp. 259–385): incantations, many of them of Levantine origin (Matthias Müller); the cultic-sacrificial ritual of Amenhotep I (Miriam-Rebecca Rose); a long oracle-charm for a child’s well-being (Carsten Preust); and the demotic magic texts of many kinds that ensured the Egyptians’ reputation for sorcery among the Greeks (Joachim-Friedrich Quack). From Iran (pp. 387–92) come texts of two disparate genres: Elamite spells embedded in Sumerian and Babylonian incantations, and an inscription of Xerxes I from Persepolis which reports his suppression of the cults of false idols (Heidemarie Koch). The book continues with Sabaic epigraphic inscriptions (pp. 393–415): votive prayers, thanksgivings and other formal texts (Anne Multhoff and Peter Stein). It concludes with more magic from Hellenistic Egypt (pp. 417–45), this time in Greek (Andrea Jördens).

This is a serious book, compiled by specialists of international reputation and edited to a high standard. Its combination of important primary sources and informed modern commentary make it a rich resource for teachers and students of the ancient world, of religion and of magic.

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