
Rosetta

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Andrew R. George, *Mesopotamian Incantations and Related Texts in the Schøyen Collection*. Volume 32 of 'Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology.' Pp. xiv & 208, 109 pl. Bethesda, Maryland. 2016. \$90.00. (Hardback) ISBN: 978193439667.

Reviewed by Kerrie. L. Myers.

The present work is Dr. Andrew R. George's most recent contribution to the Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology (CUSAS) series, and represents the continuing efforts within Assyriology to publish the extensive corpus of cuneiform texts held within the Schøyen collection. George establishes within his introduction that the aim of the present volume is to shed light on previously neglected cuneiform sources, in order to open up opportunities for further research within the broader field of Assyriology. George proceeds to state that this volume is therefore not intended to serve as an exhaustive study of the incantation texts identified within the Schøyen collection. Rather, this edition is the culmination of a years' work collating incantation texts from within the collection, and is primarily intended to act as a compilation of these texts, with the overarching aim of improving scholarly access and increasing research opportunities within Assyriology. In light of this, the present review will examine this volume not as a complete and comprehensive study of the incantation texts identified within the Schøyen collection, but as a valuable collection of new incantation texts, many of which have never been studied before, and as a stepping stone for multiple new avenues of research within Assyriology.

In total, the present work identifies and describes sixty-one incantation tablets, only two of which have been previously published, as well as ten inscribed apotropaic amulets dating from the Middle Assyrian period onwards. The texts span multiple time periods, with three dating to the Early Dynastic period, one to the Ur III or Isin period, fifty-six to the Old Babylonian period, and a single Neo-Assyrian apotropaic tablet in amulet form. The volume also contains a stray Babylonian literary text, which was first identified as a literary text in 2012, and was thus excluded from A. R. George's 2009 edition of 'Babylonian Literary Texts in the Schøyen Collection.' As a result, George has included this text within the present volume, as well as eight

plates from CUSAS volume 18, which were unfortunately missing due to a publishing error.

Within his introduction, George explains that, as with many of the cuneiform sources within the Schøyen collection, the exact provenance and archaeological context of many of the identified incantation tablets remains unknown, although some tentative efforts have been made to identify particular texts with particular scribal schools. He also clarifies that the texts themselves are mostly written in Akkadian and Sumerian, with some smaller fragments identified as Hurrian and Elamite. As a whole, the introduction is clearly structured and informative on the issues surrounding Mesopotamian incantation texts, and the contextual background for the study and incantations is thoroughly established. For example, George dedicates several pages to defining the purpose and function of incantations within Mesopotamia, and their intrinsic relationship to divine archetypes established during the period of 'mythical time.' As a result, the content and context of the present volume is easy to grasp, to the extent that readers from outside the discipline would undoubtedly be able to access this material without undue difficulty.

Following the introduction, the present volume is divided into two main chapters (excluding the tablet catalogue, concordances, references, and various indexes). In the first, aptly titled 'Descriptions of Tablets', tablets are numbered chronologically from one to seventy-seven and organised thematically according to their specific function. For instance, numbers one through to sixty-one are exclusively incantation tablets, dating from the Early Dynastic to the Neo-Assyrian periods, while numbers sixty-two to seventy-six are grouped according to their function as hemerological texts, medical texts, and apotropaic amulets respectively. The last tablet, number seventy-seven, does not fit within this organisational system, as it is the aforementioned stray Babylonian literary text.

As expected within this chapter, each tablet and/or inscribed amulet is briefly described in regards to its content, which includes key contextualising information such as the date and provenance of the tablet, if known, as well as the number of incantations identified. The incantations on each tablet are listed in order and according to their incipit, if known, as well as their line numbers and positioning upon the tablet. References are also given to secondary texts where particular or similar

texts have been examined elsewhere, and George also remarks to the reader if he himself has provided an edition of the text within the present volume, as well as the page numbers of said edition. In summary, this chapter is clear and informative. It quickly establishes the format and structure of the source material, and ensures the reader is able to access specific information regarding the tablets quickly and with ease.

The second chapter, titled 'Editions of Selected Texts', is dedicated to providing new editions of selected incantation texts from the tablets identified and described within chapter one. Incantations within this chapter are organised in thirteen sections, according to their theme and function. Each section is helpfully prefaced with a brief introduction contextualising that specific category of incantation and its wider use. For instance, the section on incantations against demons is prefaced with a discussion of these incantations within exorcism rites, as well as a short summary of our current understanding of these incantations and demons as a whole. George provides a full transliteration and translation of each selected incantation text and, where relevant, said translations are followed by philological commentary and discussion. This chapter, like the previous, is structured in a clear and informative manner. Each text is discussed at length, and George does not hesitate to reference further works to illustrate similarities and themes within the texts.

Lastly, a considerable portion of the present volume consists of one hundred and fifty one high quality plates. These plates include at least one high resolution photograph of each of the sixty-one incantation tablets within the Schøyen collection, as well as corresponding facsimiles of the cuneiform made by George himself. Each plate is clearly labelled with a collection number, and as a result they can be easily referenced and, if necessary, traced to the original collection. George also takes care to note the source of each photograph, as well as where each tablet has been discussed in previous chapters.

As a whole, this work is an impressive and invaluable collection of tablets, which will undoubtedly benefit researchers within Assyriology for many years to come. Keen attention has clearly been shown to the structure of the work and organisation of the incantation tablets, and as a result the texts can be accessed and referenced with relative ease. George has not hesitated to state to that he does not intend the

current work to be an exhaustive study of the incantation texts within the Schøyen collection, and is eager for other Assyriologists to research these texts further. Indeed, George states within the first pages of the present work that his purpose in publication is to improve access to the Mesopotamian incantation texts contained within the Schøyen collection, in order to increase opportunities for further research within Assyriology. In achieving this aim, George has certainly been successful, and should be congratulated on bringing an impressive array of Mesopotamian incantation texts to the wider attention of the Assyriological field as a whole.

Bibliography

George, A. R. 2009. *Babylonian Literary Texts in the Schøyen Collection*, in Volume 10 of 'Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology.' Maryland: Bethesda.