

1st MagEIA Symposium

Actors, Aggressors and Agency in Ancient Magical Texts

31 October – 2 November 2024



MagEIA

Magic between Entanglement, Interaction, and Analogy
KFG 42 – Centre for the Study of Magical Text Traditions
of West Asia and the Eastern Mediterranean in Antiquity

Gefördert durch



Deutsche
Forschungsgemeinschaft



Julius-Maximilians-
**UNIVERSITÄT
WÜRZBURG**



**DOMSCHULE
WÜRZBURG**
AKADEMIE DES BISTUMS

ABSTRACTS

„And you, o holy chthonic gods, from below send a ghost into the light!“ Aeschylus’ Persians 623-71 and the Longue Durée of Ancient Necromancy

Christopher A. Faraone (Chicago)

In the last century, most scholars and commentators were fairly certain that the evocation of King Darius at Aeschylus’ Persians 623-71 depicted a traditional Greek ritual that would have been familiar to his Athenian audience. Recently, however, some have doubted whether necromancy was ever actually performed in the ancient Greek world, suggesting instead that it remained a literary fantasy of one kind or another beginning with the Odyssey and continuing down to the grisly rituals of corpse-reanimation that are described in such baroque detail in later Latin authors, like Lucan and Apuleius.

Neither the early supporters nor the recent sceptics have noticed, however, that the preliminary request to a god (usually Hades) “to send up a ghost”, which is repeated three times in Aeschylus’ scene, and which appears in various forms in other early Greek literary accounts, has clear parallels in two sets of ancient ritual recipes: (1) some earlier cuneiform texts from ancient Mesopotamian and (ii) later recipes in the Greek magical handbooks from Egypt. I will argue that one can, in fact, trace the longue durée of this kind of necromancy from ancient Mesopotamia to Aeschylus’ Persians and beyond.

Of Scapegoats, Birds, and the Rest: The King and All His Substitutes in the Mesopotamian Bīt rimki Ritual

Beatrice Baragli (Würzburg)

The Bīt rimki (“bathhouse”) ritual is one of the most important royal rituals of first-millennium Assyria and Babylonia. Designed specifically for the king, it was performed to purify and protect him from various kinds of evil. It was performed out of necessity, when a particular danger threatened the king. The length of the performance, the number of prayers recited, and the many different versions make the Bīt rimki one of the most complex Mesopotamian rituals to understand.

Many of the prayers recited during this ritual describe release rituals (also known as scapegoat rituals), in which various animals and even human captives are ritually banished to a place far from civilisation as carriers of evil and impurity: 14 captives, a cow, several species of sheep, a donkey, a gazelle, a goose, a duck, two pigeons, and two fish. All these prayers were collected in the Bīt rimki to cover all the release rituals known in Babylonian-Assyrian magic, and thus to protect the king from any possible evil that might threaten him.

Although the scapegoat ritual is a well-known theme, its role in the Bīt rimki still needs to be fully understood: What is the precise relationship between these animals (and the captives) and the king, and how do they contribute to the concept of kingship expressed in the Bīt rimki? This paper will address these and several other questions concerning their relationship with the king.

Structuring Actors in Magical Texts

Daniel Kölligan & Saverio Dalpedri (Würzburg)

Any psychological or biological feature of human life, including fear, disease and misfortune, can be conceptualized as caused by a supernatural actor, a demon or divinity. In Greek epic, for example, the concepts “Old Age”, “Sleep” and “Dream” are seen as external forces, while in the New Testament diseases are often depicted as caused by a binding or hitting demon. In order to cope with these forces, magical traditions have developed structural features (incantations, rituals, etc.) that in turn may affect the profile of real and imagined actors present in them, e.g., when an Armenian version of the Sisinnios legend, which usually names three helpers against the child-snatching demon, states that two of them are “Jesus” and “Christ”. The extent to which these actors are developed may thus vary between *nuda nomina* and full-fledged personalities, as seen e.g. in the *paredroi* appearing in the PGM (Ciraolo 1995). Especially with poorly profiled deities such as Greek Φόβος and Δεῖμος the question arises whether it is necessary and helpful to assume cultural and linguistic contact in order to explain their characteristics, but even for well distinguished entities such as the Greek Γελλώ for which a connection with the Akkadian Gallû seems quite probable, the contact scenario has been questioned (cf. e.g. Johnston 1995). Studying these latter cases as examples the paper will look at the complex relationship between how actors (both traditional and newly adopted) are made to fit into existing structures and how they themselves effect structural change.

References

- Ciraolo, Leda. 1995. “Supernatural assistants in the Greek Magical Papyri”. In *Ancient magic and ritual power*, ed. by Marvin W. Meyer & Paul Mirecki. Boston: Brill, 279–295.
- Johnston, Sarah Iles. 1995. “Defining the dreadful: remarks on the Greek child-killing demon”. In *Ancient magic and ritual power*, ed. by Marvin W. Meyer & Paul Mirecki. Boston: Brill, 361–387.

CAS-E and MagEIA: Exploring Synchronicities between two Bavarian Centers for Advanced Studies

Bernd-Christian Otto (Erlangen)

Astonishingly enough, no less than two Centers for Advanced Studies (Kollegforschungsgruppen) that focus on magical and esoteric practices have been approved by the German Research Foundation (DFG) in recent years, both situated in Bavaria (Würzburg and Erlangen). After some preliminary speculations about potential reasons for this unlikely and potentially synchronistic incident, the paper outlines the research agenda of the Erlangen-based Center for Advanced Studies ‘Alternative Rationalities and Esoteric Practices from a Global Perspective’ (acronymed as CAS-E – see www.cas-e.de). CAS-E started its work in April 2022 and has a largely contemporary, comparative and global scope. Recalling CAS-E’s preliminary achievements after roughly two years of work, the paper finally suggests and discusses potential synergies and collaborations between CAS-E and MagEIA.

Conceptualizing Magicians and Witches in the Ancient World

Gideon Bohak (Tel Aviv)

Magicians and witches are mentioned in virtually every ancient language, and yet, it is often difficult to know how exactly we should think about them. One problem facing us is the long history of the terms “magic” and “witchcraft” in Western culture, which often leads to misleading anachronisms in the study of ancient societies. Another problem is the diverse nature of the ancient world, and the many terms used for “magic” and “witchcraft” in the different languages of antiquity. And a third problem has to do with the very search for a unified conceptualization of “magic” and “witchcraft” in the ancient world, which might blind us to the fact that ancient cultures may have had very different views of magicians and witches. In my talk, I will explore some of these problems, and explain why the best way to overcome them is through a close reading of the relevant texts in many ancient languages, and why this can only be achieved through the kind of multi-scholar collaboration that lies at the very heart of the MagEIA project.

The Social Agency of Ancient Curse Tablets

Sara Chiarini (Hamburg)

This paper delves into the agency of primary material remnants from an ancient ritual practice that permeated the Mediterranean basin and beyond. This ritual aimed to inflict harm upon one or more targets by inscribing the target’s name, often accompanied by a cursing prayer, and depositing the inscribed object—typically a small lead tablet—in a significant location such as a grave or a well. My focus lies on the role of the carriers of curse inscriptions, after comparison with the figurines that were sometimes placed alongside the tablet or could even serve as its substitute by bearing inscriptions themselves.

Derek Collins has reevaluated the function of ritual images, specifically cursing dolls, within the framework of ancient Graeco-Roman religious practices. He introduced the concept of social agency, as articulated by Alfred Gell, to elucidate human idolatry within an anthropological theory of representational art. According to Gell however, practitioners of curses perceived no distinction in agency between a figurine and an inscribed lead tablet, so that curse tablets too can be categorized as social agents. To adopt this perspective, we must disassociate from Collins’ correlation between belief in the social agency of an object and anthropomorphic thinking.

The tablets, serving as material surfaces upon which the ‘tortures’ inflicted upon curse victims were actually performed (e.g., scratching, twisting the writing, driving nails into them), appear to have been regarded by practitioners of curse rituals as embodying the living flesh or simulacrum (in the Epicurean sense of emanation) of their enemies.

Select bibliography

Chiarini, Sara (2021). *Devotio malefica. Die antiken Verfluchungen zwischen sprachübergreifender Tradition und individueller Prägung*. Stuttgart. 162-166.

Collins, Derek (2003). „Nature, Cause and Agency in Greek Magic“. *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 133.1, 17–49.

Collins, Derek (2008). *Magic in the Ancient World*. Malden, MA.

Frazer, James G. (1925²). *The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion*, London.

Gell, Alfred (1998). *Art and Agency. An Anthropological Theory*. Oxford.

Tambiah, Stanley J. (1973). “Form and Meaning of Magical Acts: A Point of View,” in: Horton, R. / Finnegan, R. (ed). *Modes of Thought. Essays on Thinking in Western and Non-western Societies*, London. 199–229.

Conceptualizations and Linguistic Representations of Antagonicity in (Gallo-)Roman Curse Tablets

Theresa Roth (Berlin) & Matthias Donners (Marburg)

Latin and Gaulish curse tablets (*defixiones*) are generally directed towards an individual or a group of people, in order to cause harm or manipulate them in various ways. Different strategies are used to conceptualize the relationship between the author (*defigens*) and their target (*defixus*). In our talk, we want to examine how this antagonicity is represented linguistically and in what ways the conceptualization might vary within one text, between text types and even between languages and cultures.

For the description of the antagonists, different lexical, grammatical and pragmatic elements are employed, with the effect of painting a precise picture of the prehistory, aims and purpose of the curse from the perspective of the protagonist. It is made clear, whether he or she sees their adversaries as (personal) enemies, rivals, threats or victims and how he or she envisions them to be affected by the curse. Furthermore, the relationship between the two opposing parties can be characterized by different types of agency, reflected in lexical or grammatical means of expression.

(1) dfx. 3.22/32 A,1–2

(Que)r(or) tibi de illis, qui mihi male cogitant et male faciunt (...)

“I complain to you about those who are badly disposed towards me and who are acting badly”

(2) dfx 5.1.4/5, 1 + 6–7

<i>Sinto Vale<n>tis sive alii inimici (...)</i>	“Sinto Valentis or any other enemies”
<i>Sintonem et aduitorium eius</i>	“I give Sinto and the assistant of
<i>Sintonis defero ad infero<s></i>	Sinto to the infernals”

As in (2), we also find minor adversaries such as accomplices or associates, whose antagonicity, agency, and place in the hierarchy is expressed with similar strategies. Lastly, the representation of antagonicity might contribute to identify or confirm different categories of curse tablets, with respect to their origin, context, author and purpose.

References

- Dupraz, Emmanuel, 2013: ‘Sur la formule d’introduction du plomb du Larzac’. In: *Études celtiques* 39, 2013, 193–210.
- Dupraz, Emmanuel, 2018: ‘Bemerkungen über die altkeltischen Fluchrituale: Zum Blei von Chartres und einem lateinischen Fluchtäfelchen mit Formeln keltischen Ursprungs’. In: *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 65(1), 83–122.
- Faraone, Christopher A. & Amina Kropp, 2010: ‘Inversion, Adversion and Perversion as Strategies in some Latin Curse Tablets’. In Richard L. Gordon & Francisco Marco Simon (eds.): *Magical Practice in the Latin West. Papers from the International Conference held at the University of Zaragoza 30 Sept.–1 Oct. 2005*. Leiden: Brill, 381–390.
- Kropp, Amina, 2008: *Magische Sprachverwendung in vulgärlateinischen Fluchtafeln (defixiones)*. Tübingen: Narr.
- Lambert, Pierre-Yves, 2002: *Recueil des inscriptions gauloises (R.I.G.). Vol. II, 2: Textes gallo-latins sur instrumentum*. Paris: CNRS.
- Lindeman, Frederik Otto, 2007: ‘*toncnaman toncsiiontio: Remarques critiques sur quelques formes verbales du gaulois*’. In Pierre-Yves Lambert & Georges-Jean Pinault (eds.): *Gaulois et Celtique continental*. Geneva: Droz, 231–243.
- McKie, Stuart, 2022: *Living and Cursing in the Roman West. Curse Tablets and Society*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Urbanová Daniela & Pierluigi Cuzzolin, 2016: ‘Some linguistic and pragmatic remarks on the tabellae defixionum’. In: *Journal of Latin Linguistics* 15(2), 313–345.

Early Greek Magic in Sicily: Divinities, the Dead, and Human Participants

Jessica Lamont (New Haven)

This paper examines the participants found in the oldest-known Greek curse tablets from western Sicily (c.500-450 BCE), both in terms of (1) the deities invoked, and (2) the human agents implicated in the ritual practice. Such issues relate to the broader historical questions of why and how Greek curse practice developed, and the legal, geopolitical, social, and economic factors that contributed to the ritual's emergence in Sicily around 500 BCE.

Broadly defined, Greek curse tablets are small, thin sheets of lead inscribed with maledictions and spells against rivals, lovers, or wrongdoers. Deposited in graves, chthonic sanctuaries, wells, and other subterranean locales, these objects aimed to harness supernatural powers, and bring them to bear upon unfolding situations and relationships. All current evidence suggests that curse tablets had their beginnings in Sicily, in the Greek settlements on the island's western coast. The earliest emerge soon after 500 BCE in Selinous, a site from which some 45 curse tablets have been published.¹ The recent recovery of 54 curse tablets from Himerá's Western Buonfornello necropolis will significantly expand the Sicilian curse corpus, though only two of these have been published to date.² Using these two bodies of evidence, this paper sets out the divinities invoked in the oldest Greek curse tablets, and considers how sites of deposition bear upon the question of divine agency. It then considers the human agents involved in the curse ritual, and suggests that Greek curse tablets emerge firmly within the aristocratic ethos of the late Archaic city state, often in legal contexts among competing elites, with texts composed in the Greek language and script. It was actually the city's Greek, aristocratic gene— powerful, wealthy, and literate, with great resources at their fingertips— who first deployed curse-writing rituals in the courts of law.

Works Cited

- Bettarini, L. 2005. *Corpus delle defixiones di Selinunte*. Alessandria.
- Bettarini, L. 2009. "Defixio Selinuntina inedita da Manuzza." *La Parola del Passato: Rivista di Studi Antichi* 365: 137–46.
- Brugnone, A., A. Calascibetta, and S. Vassallo. 2020. "Laminette Plumbee Iscritte da Himera." *Aristonothos: Rivista di studi sul Mediterraneo Antico* 16: 47–108.

¹ Bettarini 2005, 2009: 137.

² Brugnone et al. 2020: 47, 87.

Witches as Actors in the Hebrew Bible: Mysogynic Polemics and/or Female Healers?

Rüdiger Schmitt (Münster)

The relationship of witchcraft and gender has been an important issue in theorizing witchcraft both in Anthropology as well as in History. In the Hebrew Bible, witchcraft and witchcraft accusations are often – but not exclusively – related to the female gender. Although the Hebrew term *kāšap* "to perform witchcraft" can be applied to both genders (male in Dtn 18:10; Jer 27:9; females in 2 Kings 9:22; Isaiah 47: 1-15; Nahum 3:4), the law against witchcraft in the Book of Covenant, Exod 22:17 - "You shall not permit a witch to live") is exclusively directed against female witches and also the Henochoic and Talmudic literature shares this prejudice. The use of *kāšap*/ *mekaššēpah* to denounce women is also found in 2 Kings 9:22 regarding Queen Jezebel uttered by Jehu. The accusation of witchcraft is here paired with *zenûnim* "harlotries". We find the same stereotype associated with the "great whore" Babylon in Isaiah 47:1-15 and in a similar polemic against Nineveh in Nahum 3, where the female personification of Nineveh is accused of being a "harlot" (*zônāh*) and a "mistress of witchcraft" *ba'ālat kēšāpîm*). Authors of the prophetic texts are using a witchcraft stereotype to denounce foreign religions (in the case of Jezebel the Phoenicians), not "real" witches, or witchcraft as a phenomenon in their own society. However, a passage in Ezekiel 13:17-21 about female healers raises the question of the social reality behind witchcraft accusations. The present paper tries to explore the possible realities behind female ritual activities (both healing and malevolent witchcraft) and the role of the monopolisation of ritual authority by the biblical authors of the priestly, deuteronomic and prophetic traditions and will also address critically some modern approaches in biblical exegesis postulating a tradition of "female schamanism" as a positive reassessment of the biblical verdicts and their reception in theologically biased exegetical traditions in the footsteps of Gerhard von Rad.

Egyptian Women and their Gods vs. the Evil Dead and their Demons

Charlotte Beryl Rose (Würzburg)

Whereas the study of magic and ritual in ancient Egypt tends to concentrate on funerary texts and official cult practices, daily-life traditions have more recently become a focus of research, such as medical-magical texts. Previous scholarship has focused on the religious underpinnings of medical-magical spells, whereas others have discussed the possibility of non-professional magical practitioners. However, there has been less work focusing on the types of agency ascribed to persons, beings, and magical materials from gynecological spells. Why were deities invoked in some spells, such as those pertaining to birth and post-partum survival, whereas other spells only implied such beings? In what circumstances did the female patients play more active roles in their treatment, such as identification with certain deities? How does the attributed cause of a medical ailment, whether by spirits, demons, or condition of the uterus, affect the treatment ritual? This research examines the interplay of medical-magical practitioners, patients, spirits, demons, and magical materials through a gendered lens.

Get Them to Do the Easy Bits – The Division of Labour in Šurpu and Other Rituals

Frank Simons (Dublin)

Mesopotamian ritual series are often provided with Ritual Tablets – guides to the performance of the ceremony in which the incantations, ritual actions, and roles of the participants are described in order. Drawing on Ritual Tablets for several series, but with a particular focus on *Šurpu*, this talk will examine who says what in the performance of a Mesopotamian ritual. It will benefit from a newly identified copy of the *Šurpu* Ritual Tablet, recently discovered by the speaker, which fills in many of the gaps in our knowledge of the ceremony.

A New Syriac Manichaean Magical Bowl

Gaby Abou Samra (Beirut)

My paper concerns an unpublished Syriac magical text, in Manichaean script, inscribed on a ceramic bowl, from the late antiquity of Mesopotamia (the main source of such clay bowls). The text deals with incantatory formulas, written by a magician, for some clients (Gilayta daughter of Dudaw and the members of her family), to seal and protect them against bad aggressors (demons, devils, lilits and evil spirits). Within this kind of magical text, every actor has his own role to play: the practitioners, the clients, the angels and the deities.

This kind of objects (bowls), with their texts (amulets), allow us to comprehend their magical rituals and their roles within ceremonies in the late antiquity – during the Sasanian period, prior to Islam, with the additional insight into ancient Iraq, reflecting the conceptualizations and the beliefs of each religious communities (Jewish, Christian, Mandaean and Pagan), each with its own traditions.

Grammatical and philological studies are necessary to understand the Syriac-Manichaean language, as well its unique script. The text shall be presented together with transcription, translation and comments on certain formulas and expressions, also on certain demons and angels which characterize this kind of magical literature in the late antiquity in Mesopotamia.

Unlocking the Power of Words: The Codex as a Sacred Vessel in Ethiopian Magical Rituals

Mersha A. Mengistie (Addis Ababa)

In the enchanting realm of Ethiopian magic, where ancient beliefs and vibrant traditions intertwine, the codex holds a place of profound significance. They aren't only just for reading but also key players in rituals that heal, protect, and connect with the unseen. Far beyond mere books, these hand-crafted and scribed volumes embody a potent blend of spiritual knowledge, divine power, and healing potential. This exploration delves into the multifaceted roles of codices within Ethiopian magical rituals, revealing their enduring influence on spiritual practices, healing arts, and cultural identity. The research data will be collected from two sources. The first is the *'abənnat*, a powerful section of magical codices that reveals magical formulas and processes. The second is from insights from Ethiopian magic practitioners through direct observations and interviews. This presentation will begin with the uncovering of a special list of Ethiopian codices known for their magical powers. Then, it will discuss how codices are used in rituals, not just as guides, but as physical objects with their own unique power.

The Ethiopic Lefafe Tsedeq, a Text and Object that is the Locus of Ritual Performance

Dan Levene (Southampton)

There have been four editions published of Ethiopic Lefafe Tsedeq (LS): Turaiev 1908, Budge 1929, Euringer 1940, and Tesfa Gebre Selassie in 1993-4. These editions alone make it clear that variation is significant. Having collated over twenty additional variants has allowed me to make a number of observations about the LS' structure, nature of its variability, types of content it draws upon, and various ways in which it has been used. The LS is not redacted and is still found in contemporaneous versions well into the 20th century.

The earliest manuscript of the LS I have seen in BM 16,204, thought to be from the first half of the 17th century. The dates regarding earlier levels of LS traditions are hard to ascertain. Historical events that include the destruction of Ethiopian Orthodox Christian institutions and manuscripts (The war with Ahmed Gragn in the 16th century), theological changes that involved the outlawing of magical texts (the 15th century emperor Zara Yaqob), and the perishability of parchment in wet conditions have limited the survival of manuscript materials. What can be said with confidence is that there is much in the LS that is earlier in provenance than that which has physically survived.

The LS attests to itself as a text and object that is the focus of performative ritual praxis. Over and above this the fact that evidence of such praxis still survives means there is also living informants who can offer another level of evidence.

In this presentation I will map all actors, human and supernatural, discuss the respective parts they play in the complex dynamic the LS is at the centre of.

“Be Adjured by Heaven, Be Adjured by Earth:” Oath Language in Mesopotamian Incantations

Jon Beltz (Würzburg)

Oaths played an important role in Mesopotamian society, serving as a mechanism to control behavior and ensure trustworthiness. As a type of performative language, their utterance functioned to create new realities. It should not be surprising, then, that oaths are related to another type of performative language: incantations. In fact, certain incantations such as **zi--pa₃** incantations exorcized their patients by means of oaths imposed onto demons. This paper examines certain types of Sumerian and Akkadian oaths found in treaties, literature, legal texts, and letters, comparing them to clear parallels in **zi--pa₃** incantations and other possible examples in different types of Mesopotamian incantations. These parallels show how familiar practices from the human world could be extrapolated into the divine realm and applied to the demonic beings Mesopotamians were attempting to exorcize. In particular, legal texts show how oaths could be imposed on possibly unwilling individuals and treaties indicate that the gods could serve to enforce stipulations on foreign entities not under conventional jurisdiction.

Magical Aspects in Some Temple Rituals for the Protection of Pharaoh from Tebtunis

Susanne Töpfer (Turin)

There is a group of five fragmentary manuscripts, whose fragments are distributed between the papyrus collections of Copenhagen, Florence, Berlin, Oxford, and Yale. These five manuscripts were found in Tebtunis, the text copies are written in hieratic and date to the 2nd century CE. The texts contain temple rituals, or rather parts thereof, whose aim is the protection of the body of “Pharaoh”. In addition to the sacerdotal king, the setem and the chief lector priest as well as the high *wab*-priests and the *wab*-priest of Sekhmet are also referred to as actors of the rituals. For achieving the objective, that is the protection of “Pharaoh”, those priests have to perform several magical spells against all evil, which are to be recited, as well as undertake purifications, libations, and giving offerings. The king himself acts as high priest; his differentiation from the other priests, as mentioned in these texts, is brought about by his identification with gods such as Shu and Ihy, and his equipping with royal insignia. Although the king is therefore the beneficiary of the ritual and magical actions as well, there is a consequent distinction within these texts between the ruler in his double role of active king and passive Pharaoh. Every action the king accomplished and the tangible matter he receives is for his social materiality as the legitimated ruler and protected Pharaoh.

Some of the spells and instructions used in the manuscripts are parallels or variations of texts which are inscribed on textiles and amuletic papyri, as well as on the walls of the temples at Edfu and Dendera. The aim of the paper is to discuss the magical aspects of the ritual texts in comparison with the parallels. Furthermore, the connection of the rituals with the sacral affirmation of the Roman Emperor as Egyptian Pharaoh, and the medial state of the local priesthood as his deputy shall be examined.

Pharaoh, Help Thyself! Empowering the King against Enemies and Dangers in the Pyramid Texts

Svenja Nagel (Würzburg)

The Egyptian Pyramid Texts (PT) form a vast collection of different types of spells, which were inscribed in the pyramid chambers of the Pharaohs and some queens of the late Old Kingdom (from ca. 2350 BCE onwards) and served to ascertain their postmortem existence as resurrected and well supplied powerful beings among the gods. Based on recitation texts from different original ritual contexts, individual collections of such spells were selected and adapted for the new monumental tomb contexts. A large number of spells focuses – sometimes among other themes – on the protection of the deceased king (or queen) against various types of dangers and antagonists that may hinder his resurrection process and ascent to the sky or imperil his sound condition and status as a powerful being in the envisioned afterlife. In order to protect against, or even eliminate all possible dangers, on the one hand various deities are recruited to help, while on the other hand the text owner himself is empowered to act on his own behalf and to conjure, threaten or strike aggressors that come in the shape of gods, demons and dangerous animals. This paper will, through some selected text examples, explore different techniques and stylistic devices used in apotropaic conjurations and other types of PT-spells to achieve this goal of endowing the king with (magical) power over enemies and obstructions. The particular roles he has to assume, his interaction with deities, and the implications for the conceptualisation of the status of Pharaoh will be discussed, while other possible users of such spells (or their models) will also be considered.

Dream Requests in the Magical Formularies

Sofía Torallas Tovar (Chicago/Princeton)

In the Greco-Egyptian magical formularies, dream requests (or dream oracles) were a significant feature of magical practices. People often sought divine guidance or answers to their personal questions through dreams. Their purpose was to seek divine revelation, healing, or advice on various matters. Contemporary literary sources, like Artemidoros and Galen complete the picture. I would like to present the two sources of information we have, the papyri and literary texts, in contrast, and explore how dream request and requesters were seen by others.

Stranger Things? New Insights into the Corpus of Kultmittelbeschwörungen

Elyze Zomer (Tübingen)

Although the existence of *Kultmittelbeschwörungen* has been well established and recognized in the field of Ancient Near Eastern Studies, an edition of all extant *Kultmittelbeschwörungen* together with an encompassing study exposing their intrinsic structures is still a desideratum. This paper presents preliminary results of an in-depth study on the subject of *Kultmittelbeschwörungen* ranging from the third millennium to the first millennium BCE revisiting the definition of *Kultmittelbeschwörung*, elaborating on the agency of objects, and investigating possible interconnections between this specific type of incantations and the cultural and material remains of the society that created them, thereby producing an innovative investigation into the human-object relations in the Ancient Near East.

Twin, Exorcist, and Ruler of the World. The Remarkable Career of a Valiant Doorkeeper

Daniel Schwemer (Würzburg)

The god Lugalirra is one of the minor gods of the extensive Babylonian pantheon. Together with his twin brother Meslamta'ea, he serves as a gatekeeper of the netherworld; both are depicted as a warlike pair of identical twins in the visual arts. In the night sky the two brothers are identified with the two main stars of the constellation of the Great Twins (Gemini; Castor and Pollux). None of the narrative or cultic traditions of Babylonia would suggest that Lugalirra was ever more than a lowly servant in the divine courtyard of the deities in charge of the Land-of-No-Return, the subterranean part of the cosmos populated by the dead. It is therefore remarkable and unexpected that Lugalirra advances to be invoked as the most prominent divine participant in the ritual *Bīt mēseri* ("House of enclosure"), an extensive apotropaic ritual of Babylonian exorcistic lore (*āšipūtu*) that was used to protect houses and their inhabitants from evil demons. I will discuss how Lugalirra's character as a nocturnal twin god formed the foundation for his remarkable and multifaceted prominence in the rites and recitations of *Bīt mēseri*. The texts show that far from serving only as a divine doorkeeper, Lugalirra takes on various roles in the ritual: guard, warrior, constable, but also twin, exorcist, master of ceremonies, and by identification with *Asalluḫi-Marduk*, universal ruler of the world. Special attention will be paid to Lugalirra's relationship to the other participants of the ritual, the human ritual specialist and the patient, but also the other deities and spirits that are invoked in the course of the ritual proceedings. The discussion of Lugalirra's position in the *Bīt mēseri* ritual will provide an example of how the magical text traditions of first-millennium Babylonia are a place of theological innovation and creativity.

Divine Intervention in Hittite ritual Practice

Giulia Torri (Florence)

Within the corpus of Hittite ritual texts, primarily composed and preserved in the capital city of *Ḫattuša*, yet possessing a complex redactional history, several deities are mentioned. They are not merely passive recipients of offerings and sacrifices; rather, in some cases, they are invoked to actively participate and contribute to the successful completion of the ritual. In numerous rituals, this divine intervention is illustrated through recitations with the formal aspect of *historiolae*, where the deity acts within the mythical realm to resolve challenging situations. This concept is mirrored in the ritual performance on the human level, where the human performer replicates the actions of the deity and recites utterances, such as those spoken by the magician *Ḫantitaššu* in the ritual for troublesome years (CTH 395): "They are not my words. They are the words of the Sun God and of *Kamrušepa*. Let them be the conjurations of mankind" (KBo 11.14 ii 25-26). In other rituals, the deity is symbolically represented and often objectified through figurines specifically crafted for the ritual. These deities are invoked to absorb pollution and dispel it. For instance, the (Storm)god of Blood(shed) in the ritual for bloodshed (CTH 446; as discussed by Schwemer in a forthcoming publication), or the Storm-god of the open country, referred to as "The one of the impurity," mentioned in the ritual of *Puriyanni* (CTH 758), and even the *Ḫantašepa* deities in the ancient ritual for the royal couple (CTH 416). A speech-act elucidates the deity's role and the purification process. The mythical background of these cases, evidently assumed by the ritual performer, remains obscure. My presentation aims to elucidate these two conditions regarding the active involvement of deities, and to delineate instances and aspects of divine participation in rituals.

Actors, Aggressors, and Agency in the Horus Temple of Edfu: The North Wall of the Enclosure Wall

Martin Stadler (Würzburg)

The temple of Horus in Edfu is the best preserved ancient Egyptian temple and its corpus of inscriptions is extraordinary. The multimodal corpus is dominated by (1) ritual scenes, (2) mythological knowledge texts and (3) recitation texts, which are assigned to a cult space and purpose by their location. In particular the enclosure wall contains texts to ward off evil entities. The situation of the Edfu inscriptions is unique, since the texts are found in a fully preserved context, together with other texts that shed light on the usage and mobility of protection and annihilation rituals for the king (and partly adapted for Horus). The inscriptions that are the basis of the paper cover the internal side of the enclosure of the temple of Edfu, where they were inscribed in the reign of Ptolemy IX Philometor Soter. In the second register of the northern wall are inscribed two apotropaic rituals, the book s3pr “Protection of the house” in the western half (Edfou VI 143, 8–151, 9) and, in the eastern half, the book mk.t ḥꜥ.w “Guarding the body” (Edfou VI 299, 6–303, 14). The prescriptive portions of the rituals were embedded into descriptions of ritual actions, including a reference to the recitation of spells against the Evil Eye as well as ritual scenes that evoke the usage of spells against the Evil Eye (Edfou VI 263, 4–6), recitations against the dangers of the new year, the litany to the good (new) year, the famous Great Horus Myth of Edfu, and other relevant texts. The two apotropaic rituals are adaptations of presumably royal texts. The paper will present first considerations on the two apotropaic books inscribed on the inner side of the north wall to analyse it from the perspective on actors, aggressors, and agency.

