

DIVINATION AS A SCIENCE IN ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA¹⁾

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The science in question is the type of divination which by various assyriologists has been called “artificially procured”, “inductive” or “deductive”, “empirical”, “provoked”, or “deliberately sought out”, whichever term one would choose for extispicy, lecanomancy, libanomancy, and aleuromancy²⁾. A slaughtered sheep, oil, incense and flour were all ingredients in a food offering to a deity, and it was in a sacrificial setting that these particularly Mesopotamian types of divination were based³⁾.

The *bārû*, “diviner” or “examiner”, was the professional who performed these types of divination. Of these, extispicy was by far the most important and complex method and the one which presented the greatest challenge to the diviner.

The *bārû* fulfilled many roles as: a man of education and learning, a scribe, a copyist, an editor, a librarian, a master of ceremonies, a man of god, an anatomist, and a courtier. The few who reached the top of their profession were called *ummânû*, “experts” or “masters”⁴⁾.

In sources outside the omen literature the task of the diviner is summarized as follows: *lipit qāti hiniq immeri naqē niqē nēpešti bārûti*, “the ‘touch of hand’, the restriction (?) of the sheep, the offering of the sacrifice, the performance of extispicy”⁵⁾.

¹⁾ Text of a lecture presented at the Symposium, “Science in Ancient Mesopotamia”, Leiden, 14-15 May 1992.

²⁾ The various descriptive terms have been compiled by O. Gurney in M. Loewe and C. Blacker (eds.), *Divination and Oracles* (London 1981) 142 and n. 3.

³⁾ For the divination from slaughtered and plucked fowl, see J.-M. Durand, *ARM* 26 I/1 (Paris 1988) 11.

⁴⁾ For the title *ummânû*, see S. J. Lieberman, “Canonical and Official Cuneiform Texts: Towards an Understanding of Assurbanipal’s Personal Tablet Collection”, in: T. Abusch, J. Huehnergard and P. Steinkeller (eds.), *Lingering over Words. Moran Homage Volume*, HSS 37 (1990) 305-336. The title appears to have been used mostly by the scholars who specialized in astrology, but a tablet of the extispicy series, *Multābiltu*, is discussed by Assurbanipal in “the assembly of the *ummânû*”, see Streck, *Assurbanipal* (Leipzig 1916) II 254:15. The following reference is from the *mukallimtu*, Boissier, *DA* 13: i 47: BE-ma um-ma-an-ka i-šá-al-ka ..., “if your master asks you: ...”.

⁵⁾ The references are quoted in the CAD L, 202.

The *lipit qāti*, I presume, refers to a gesture by which the sacrificial animal was introduced into the extispicy ritual⁶).

The *hiniq immeri* is difficult. *Hanāqu* in the meaning, "to strangle", is hardly appropriate because the sheep was certainly not killed by strangulation. At a guess, the expression might refer to a way of handling and restricting the animal prior to the slaughter.

The *naqē niqē* must refer to the killing and subsequent butchering of the animal and perhaps also to the libations afterwards of water⁷).

The *nēpešti bārûti* refers to the application of knowledge when interpreting the entrails.

The composite task of the *bārû* is described differently in the Neo-Assyrian *ikribu*, Zimmern, *BBR* no. 94+ : obv. 21'-22' (duplicated by Zimmern, *BBR* no. 82+ : i 1'-3') : ... *ina SILIM EN GARZA ana GARZA¹-šû EN ih-zi ana ih-zi-šû [EN til]-la-ti ana til-la-ti-šû [E]N e-mu-qi ana e-mu-qi-šû it-kal*, "upon a good (omen result), the master of the rite has trusted his rite, the master of skill his skill, [the master of as]sistence his assistance, the master of his strength". According to this tentative translation, the diviner had to mobilize a proper ritual or rite (*paršu*), all his skill or know-how (*ihzu*), the back-up forces(?) available to him (*tillatu*), and his own physical strength (*emūqu*)⁸).

In the same *ikribu* the diviner addresses Šamaš and Adad as follows: *ba-ru-ta qī-šá-a-ni [p]i-ta-a-ni uz-[né-ia p]el-ka-a ma-ši-ta lu-uh-su-us*, "grant me *bārûtu*, give me intelligence, let me remember the forgotten knowledge" (Zimmern, *BBR* no. 94+ : obv. 23'-24' and duplicate *BBR* no. 82+ : i 5'-6')⁹).

Other sources from Nineveh, especially the colophons of Assurbanipal's *bārûtu* texts, emphasize that divining required intelligence, in Akkadian literally "wide open ear" (*uznu rapāstu*, *uznā palkātu*, *hasīsu palkū*). *Nēmequ* (NAM.KÛ.ZU) likewise occurs in the above-mentioned colophons and, like *uznu*, it refers to god-given knowledge or wisdom¹⁰). Ritual texts from Zimmern, *BBR* also specify that the *bārû* must be *kašid ihzīšu*, "accomplished in his craft"¹¹). *Ihzu* is gained from man-given instruction and perhaps *kašid ihzīšu* should simply be translated "experienced".

⁶) According to the Mari material, not just the sheep to be sacrificed, but also the people for whom the omens were taken, could be "touched" on their forehead (*pūtu*), see J.-M. Durand, *ARM* 26 I/1 38-39.

⁷) See Zimmern, *BBR* (Leipzig 1901) no. 84: 10 and duplicate no. 85: obv. 10: *ik-rib A.MEŠ a-na KUD-UDU.NITA₂ BAL-e*, "prayer when libating water for the cut of the ram".

⁸) The joins which have made a fuller understanding of this important passage possible have been made by W.G. Lambert who is publishing the *ikribu* texts.

⁹) No. 82: i 6' has: *uz-'né pal-ka'*. The reading of this line is uncertain; *palkā/pelkā* must be considered to be an error for *palkāti*.

¹⁰) For the terms for intelligence, see H.D. Galter, "Die Wörter für 'Weisheit' im Akkadischen", *Meqor Hajjim. Georg Molin Festschrift* (Graz 1985) 89-105.

¹¹) No. 1-20: 19 and no. 24: obv. 42. No. 24 has been treated in W.G. Lambert "Enmeduranki and Related Matters", *JCS* 21 (1967) 132-138.

The intelligence which the diviner was expected to possess was of the most comprehensive kind and because of the very wideness of the field he was supposed to cover, "scholar" or "scientist" hardly describes the *bārû*.

Neo-Assyrian rituals state further requirements for the diviner. His eyes must not be *zaqtā* and his finger must not be *nakpat*¹²). The *AHw* has two verbs, *zaqātu* I, "to sting"/"to hurt", and *zaqātu* II, "to be pointed". Although the exact meaning of *zaqtā inā* cannot be ascertained it is reasonable to suggest that the expression refers to a condition which results in impaired vision if not blindness¹³). According to the *CAD*, there are two verbs *nakāpu*, I translated "to butt", and II left untranslated. I would suggest that *nakāpu* in the mentioned context should be translated "to butt" and that the relatively common apodosis, *nikip ubāni*, should be translated: "butting of a finger" and that it, like the expression, *ša ubānšu nakpat*, "whose finger is butting", refers to clumsiness¹⁴). Furthermore, according to one Neo-Assyrian ritual, the diviner was not to have chipped teeth either¹⁵). Perhaps this requirement should be understood in the context of the chewing of cedar which was part of the purification ritual of the *bārû*¹⁶).

Texts from mainly the Old Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian periods suggest that there was a bedrock of tradition for the performance of extispicies.

The basic pattern can be summarized as follows: A ram or lamb was sacrificed, not to Šamaš and Adad, but, I believe, to the personal god of the client¹⁷). A question about one specific matter and, when relevant, for a limited period was put to the Divine Council (*puhru*), chaired by Šamaš. This deity as the supreme judge authorized the verdict of the Council to be encoded into the entrails of the slaughtered animal. The diviner, using cedar as a cleansing agent, underwent a rite of purification before the ritual during which the great gods were invited for a meal. The sheep used for divination was killed by cutting the throat, decapitated, and

¹²) See Zimmern, *BBR* no. 1-20: 4-5 and no. 24: obv. 31-32.

¹³) See M. Stoll, "Blindness and Night-Blindness in Akkadian", *JNES* 45 (1986) 295-299, especially 295 n. 5. In the commentary, *CT* 20, 26, the following two apodoses are paralleled: obv. 17: IGI.2 LÚ iš-šal-la (var. *CT* 20, 11: obv. 27: *is-sal-la*), "the man's eyes will deteriorate (literally: fall ill)", and *CT* 20, 26: r. 2: *ni-kip šu.si*.

¹⁴) In *CT* 51, no. 216: 6', *nikip ubāni* is mentioned in connection with the musical instrument, *šinnatu*. Lack of dexterity would be as disastrous for the musician as it was for the diviner.

¹⁵) Zimmern, *BBR* 24: obv. 31: *he-pu ZÚ.MEŠ*.

¹⁶) Zimmern, *BBR* 75+: obv. 16': GIŠ.ERIN ina KA-šú i-na-'i-š, "he chews cedar in his mouth" (duplicated by no. 76+ obv. 4); no. 11: iii 7' has: GIŠ.ERIN ina KA-šú i-na-'i-aš/. The cleansing of the mouth with cedar is also referred to in the Old Babylonian ritual, *YOS* 11 no. 22: obv. 6: *ak-pu-ur pi-ia i-na ša-bi-im* GIŠ.ERIN, "I wiped my mouth with ... cedar".

¹⁷) The role of personal god of the client in an extispicy will be dealt with in a monograph under preparation. The following passage gives an indication of the essential role played by this deity: Zimmern, *BBR* no. 88: r. 17-18': GUB-az DINGIR-šú UTU i-sal-la ana Bu-ne-n[e...]/ SUM-in UTU ana DUMU LÚ.HAL AD.HAL UTU u q[...], "his (the client's) personal god is present, he (the personal god) appeals to Šamaš, to Bunene [...], Šamaš grants to the *bārû* the secret of Šamaš and Adad".

dismembered according to a settled procedure¹⁸). The liver and the lungs were taken out and subjected to a detailed examination. The condition of the various anatomical parts was recorded and upon a majority of good features the omen result was declared favourable, perhaps with reservations if there had been adverse features of special significance. In certain cases, it was deemed necessary to conduct a check-up examination (*piqittu*) and even a third one. It is not entirely certain whether this meant that one or two more animals were slaughtered or colleagues of the diviner checked the entrails of the same animal¹⁹).

The basic rules of interpretation had been established by the time of the earliest recorded extispicies which are the Mari liver models from the early Old Babylonian period²⁰). The main bulk of the omen literature consists of the compendia which are composed to a strict pattern of repeating the *šumma* sentence. This grammatical unit first occurs in the afore-mentioned liver models and it usually consists of a protasis which describes a given condition of the entrails and an apodosis which, in some cases, is phrased as an answer to a question²¹). Obviously, the ancient scribes found this listing of *šumma* sentences a very useful way of communicating and storing knowledge. Also it was an aid to memorization which the diviner needed in his task.

One Neo-Assyrian source states: Zimmern, *BBR* 11: ii 9': *ina eli bēl niqê bārûta teppuš*, "over the owner of the sacrifice you perform *bārûtu*". In other words, the interpretative apparatus of the diviner should only be used for the sake of the client in a specific situation. There is nothing to suggest that animals were slaughtered and entrails observed merely in order to increase the study material, although one would have thought that the compilation of additional data from experimentation would have been most useful.

However, omen results from extispicies might have been man-made but they were also god-given. Only in a carefully staged setting with an aura of mystique would the gods communicate through the entrails. In this setting god and man, Heaven and Earth met. The link was, as claimed earlier, the personal god of the client functioning as an intermediary between the great gods and the human protégé. Before even contemplating a petition to the Divine Council, the individual had to keep on good terms with his own personal god by regular offerings and also by keeping to a certain standard of appearance, behaviour and ethical values. The

¹⁸) See D.A. Foxvog, "A Manual of Sacrificial Procedure", DUMU-E₂-DUB-BA-A. *Studies in Honor of Åke W. Sjöberg* (Philadelphia 1989) 167-176.

¹⁹) For the expressions, *qātum* and *piqittum*, see J.-M. Durand, *ARM* 26 I/1 (Paris 1988) 46-48.

²⁰) First published in M. Rutten, "Trente-deux modèles de foie en argile inscrits provenant de Tell-Hariri (Mari)", *RA* 35 (1938) 36-70. For a study of these liver models, see D. C. Snell, "The Mari Livers and the Omen Tradition", *JANES* 6 (1974) 117-123.

²¹) See U. Jeyes, *Old Babylonian Extispicy. Omen Texts in the British Museum* (Istanbul 1989) 44.

physiognomic omens are one source which highlights the relationship between a man and his personal god²²).

A good omen result could therefore be described as the crowning glory of this all important relationship. But it was also the result of an expensive and laborious ritual and a manifestation of god-given knowledge. Not surprisingly, *bārûtu* was sometimes called a *niširtu*, "a treasure" or "a secret", i.e. something to be safeguarded²³). The actual omen tablets and, in the first millennium, writing boards were regarded as manifestations of the divine, costly possessions and therefore something well worth stealing.

Because the diviner's work programme was dictated by the needs of his client his study material could only increase gradually. Its sacredness meant validity but also, it could not be ignored. Tradition and stagnation, rather than innovation and progress, have caught the attention of assyriologists and to redress the balance, I shall go to some length to characterize Mesopotamian extispicy as a developing science.

There were indeed some factors in the whole system of divination which infused it with a certain dynamic force.

As already hinted at, the ritual was rich and elaborate and comparable to a courtcase in which the judges, before giving their verdict, had been mollified by splendid entertainment. There must have been a belief that one could, at least to some degree, mould the will of the gods, because otherwise, why go to such length? Apparently, the Mesopotamians did not have a principle which corresponds to our "fate", i.e. something predetermined and inevitable which meant that they did not have to look to the future in a laid-back, fatalistic frame of mind²⁴). In partnership with the divine man could, in a sense, shape his own future, by necessity taken step by step, because the system required regular consultations by acts of extispicy. In this form of divination the gods could only deliver (or refuse to deliver) an answer to a question. If not asked they would have to express themselves by other means and through other channels.

The needs of the client in this anthropocentric form of divination were, up to a point, centred around words and expressions like: *kapādu*, "to plan", *šummirātu/tašmirtu*, "enterprise". *šibûtu*, "project", *kišitti qāti*, "gain", *šallatu*, "booty", *zittu*,

²²) Published in F.R. Kraus, *Texte zur babylonischen Physiognomatik*, *AfO Beih.* 3 (Berlin 1939). Another source in which the personal god is frequently mentioned is the proverbs, see W.G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford 1960) 222-282; one example is: 227: 23-26: *u₄-ma ta-kap-pu-ud DINGIR-ka ku-u u₄-ma ul ta-kap-pu-ud DINGIR-ka la-a ku-u*, "on the day you plan ahead, your god is yours, on the day you do not plan ahead, your god is not yours". According to my interpretation of this proverb, the meaning is something like: "God helps him who helps himself".

For a comprehensive study of this deity, see H. Vorländer, *Mein Gott*, *AOAT* 23 (Neukirchen 1975).

²³) See I. Starr, *The Rituals of the Diviner*, *BM* 12 (Malibu 1983) 55-56.

²⁴) See F. Rochberg-Halton "Fate and Divination in Mesopotamia", *AfO Beih.* 19 (1982) 363-371; also Durand, *ARM* 26 I/1 25 and 62 n. 308.

"profit", *mīli irti*, "success", *šumu*, "fame", all frequently occurring in the omen literature. This enterprising spirit also shines through in e.g. the Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions in which the kings claim to build bigger, better and higher, travel further afield, annex more land, collect more booty and, in Assurbanipal's case, be more learned than any predecessor. Looking back at his ancestors with their failings and misfortunes, the king, as a client of the diviner, must have been minded for expressing a need for an improved and improving system of divination.

Developments in the ritual

We have ample textual material to reconstruct the Neo-Assyrian extispicy ritual performed for the royal client. The material from other periods is not nearly as comprehensive and comparisons will have to be made with great caution. However, there are indications that this ritual peaked in its complexity during the Sargonid period.

One important source is the collections of *ikribū* some of which are published in Zimmern, *BBR*. An *ikribu* may contain a petition to the Divine Council but also an introduction and consecration of a sacrificial item or a piece of the ritual gadgetry. These prayers were also recited during the Old Babylonian period but perhaps not in such quantity. In any case, it was considered to be necessary in the first millennium to produce texts which gave instructions about the order in which the *ikribū* should be recited. In Zimmern, *BBR* no. 75+, duplicated by nos. 76+, 77, and 78+, 21 different prayers are referred to. If this number of prayers, if not more, had to be offered during one ritual, it is not surprising that an excuse, a so-called *ezib*-formula, had to be given at the beginning of the whole procedure about a slip of the tongue. Altogether seven *ezib*-formulae are attested²⁵). They are excuses for any indeliberate error which might creep into the ritual. These formulae are not attested to any earlier period and they may be a first millennium addition. Perhaps the following unique apodosis from a Nineveh compendium refers to the diviner having to start all over again if he made a mistake in his recitation: *CT* 30, 15: obv. 11': LÚ.HAL *ana ik-ri-bi-šú* GUR-ár, "the diviner will turn back (to the beginning of) his *ikribus*".

As far as I have been able to make out, the question posed to the Divine Council was whispered into the ear of a lamb which was given as a special offering to Šamaš and Adad²⁶). Having, so to speak, eaten the question these gods communicated

²⁵) See I. Starr, *Queries to the Sungod. Divination and Politics in Sargonid Assyria*, *SAA* 4 (Helsinki 1990) XXII-XXVII. Two *ezib*-clauses are also found in CBS 12578, published in E. Leichty "A *tamītu* from Nippur", *HSS* 37 (Atlanta 1990) 301-304.

²⁶) See Zimmern, *BBR* no. 98: 8'-9' (duplicated by no. 99: r. 5'-6'): UDU.SILA₄ KÙ *qud-du-ša ša mi-na-tu-šu šal-[ma ...] ta-mit ša-ka ina GIŠ.ERIN ina GEŠTUG.2 150-[šú ...]*, "You [...] a pure, consecrated lamb of healthy body. The query of your choice [...] in a cedar (pipe?) in [its] left ear"; also Sm 998* obv. 10'

the reply to the personal god of the client, the deity who for a short while became present in another animal, the ram which was used for the extispicy. It is likely that we are dealing with a late refinement in the use of two animals as channels of communication.

Ritual purity

The Old Babylonian rituals, *YOS* 11 nos. 22 and 23, published by Goetze and Starr respectively, have references to the cleansing of the diviner's person; *YOS* 11 no. 22 specifies mouth and hands²⁷).

According to the first millennium texts, it appears that the diviner's toilette became more elaborate. The washing of mouth of hands was, of course, still a requirement²⁸), but there are also a reference to a change of clothes and tamarisk and cedar put into the ears of the diviner. Also mention is made of an anointing and fumigation of the diviner with sulphur and yellow sulphur (*kibrītu* and *ru'tītu*)²⁹).

In the Neo-Assyrian texts belonging to the category, "Behaviour of the Sacrificial Lamb", and in the series, *šumma isru* and *šumma manzāzu*, the following apodosis is recurring: *lā ellu niqā ilput*, "an unclean person has touched the sacrifice"³⁰). This apodosis has not been found in the earlier material and only two Old Babylonian parallels are attested³¹). Such apodoses could have been given as answers to a question like: "What went wrong with the extispicy which produced a bad omen result"?

This assumed increased awareness of the need for ritual purity is reflected in other sources, like the *šumma ālu* text, K 1562, which was first published in

(duplicated by K 4733*, 6'): *ik-rib un-nin/un-nin-ni šā GEŠTUG.2 lu-[uh-hu-ši]*, "prayer when wh[ispering] the plea into the ear", (quoted by the *CAD I/J*, 63). I suggest that this is the lamb which was given as a special offering to Šamaš and Adad during the ritual, referred to in Zimmern, *BBR* 1-20: 112-114. Although the entrails of this animal were an object of a cursory examination, I believe that it was the ram, referred to in the following line, that was used for the extispicy proper: *BBR* 1-20: 115: *ana DINGIR LÚ UDU.NITA₂ SISKUR KUD-is*, "for the personal god of the man you sacrifice the *immer niqē*". Thus I depart from an earlier held view, publicized in *Assyriological Miscellanies* 1 (Copenhagen 1980) 16. This ram is also referred to in *BBR* 84: obv. 5; 85 obv. 5'; 86: 5': *ik-rib A.MEŠ 3-šu ana KUD-is UDU.NITA₂ ŠUB-e*, "prayer when pouring water three times for the slaughtering of the ram".

²⁷) *YOS* 11 no. 22 is published in A. Goetze "An Old Babylonian Prayer of the Divination Priest", *JCS* 22 (1968) 25-29; see obv. 5. *YOS* 11 no. 23 is published in Starr, *Rituals* (Malibu 1983); see obv. 8. For the duplicate line in AO 7032 obv. 8, see Starr, *Rituals* 122.

²⁸) See Zimmern, *BBR* no. 96: i 3; no. 97 + : r. 8'.

²⁹) Zimmern, *BBR* no. 79: obv. 4-8; no. 11: iii 2'-11'.

³⁰) Usually written: *NU KÙ SISKUR TAG-ut*, see f. ex. *CT* 31, 32: r. 8'; *KAR* 423: i 11; *K* 2722 + *: obv. 24, 29, 31, 33; *K* 3978 + *: ii 4; *CT* 51 no. 155: 13', 19'.

³¹) The first example, *YOS* 10, 17: r. 65, is quoted in U. Jeyes, *Extispicy* (1989) 43. The second example is: *CT* 3, 2: obv. 2: *lā ellum ana niqēm iṭṭehi*, "an unclean person has been near to the sacrifice" (oil omen compendium).

Boissier, *Choix* II (1906) 41-44³²). The "wash omens" in this text concentrate on the washing of hands. Another text, *KAR* 52, which was not incorporated into the *šumma ālu* series, gives instructions for the right time and place for one's ablutions; the first line is: [DIŠ] NA ina tal-lāk-te A.MEŠ TU₅ ul-tab-bar, "[if] a man washes himself in the approach (to his house): he will last long"³³). In a passage from an Asarhaddon inscription it says: Borger, *Esarh.* 105 §68 11: ii 29: *kīma li[lili (...)] arki niqēka tarammuk*, "like a fo[ol (...)] you wash yourself after your sacrifice"³⁴).

Etiquette

Tablets which I would label "etiquette" are, to my knowledge, only attested to the first millennium. One text, *K* 57, was published by Nougayrol in *RA* 61 (1967) 36. One instruction from this text is: obv. 21: "if he (the client) stands while the *bārû* is seated: a *pitrustu* (i.e. an ambiguous sign)". An unpublished parallel text, *K* 11716 + *K* 12895, quoted by the *CAD*, warns not to sneeze (?), snivel, fidget, dress sloppily or to be clumsy³⁵).

These texts have links with *šumma ālu* where tablet 95 (*CT* 39, 41-42) deals with a man's relationship with his god. Another text, *CT* 39, 34-36, also focusses on the cult of the personal god. Further texts which may or may not belong to this series suffice to demonstrate that etiquette was a priority³⁶). In my view, it is not justified to claim that divination in Mesopotamia required mere technique and no morals. On the contrary, etiquette as well as ethics should be included in the list which comprised the *bārû*'s field of expertise.

Timing

The afore-mentioned text, *K* 57, has a colophon which says: "(it is) written (as an extract) from 'The Good Days of Divination'". Although the Mari material gives indications that there, at that period, was a concept of good timing for performing extispices³⁷, the hemerologies from Assur and Nineveh provide more specific instructions. According to the earlier Assur hemerology the *bārû* should not apply his skills on the following days of the month: the 1st, 7th, 9th, 14th, 19th, 21st, 28th, 29th, and 30th³⁸). The extispicy commentary, *KAR* 151, excludes the

³²) For the place of this text in *šumma ālu*, see F. Köcher and A.L. Oppenheim, "The Old Babylonian Omen Text VAT 7525", *AfO* 18 (1957-58) 62-77, especially 70, 73.

³³) According to a private communication from E. Leichty, *KAR* 52 is not a *šumma ālu* text.

³⁴) Quoted in the *CAD* L, 189.

³⁵) For obv. 8': *šum-ma ap-pa-šu û-gan-na-aš* HAR.BAD *d[al-hat]*, "if he wrinkles his nose (sniffs?): the omen is co[nfused]", see the *CAD* G, 40. The full text will be published in the afore-mentioned monograph, see n. 17.

³⁶) Boissier, *Choix* II, 12-13 (*K* 2685 + *K* 3762); *CT* 39, 38 (*K* 4057); *CT* 39, 43 (*K* 12310); *CT* 40, 44 (*K* 3821); *CT* 48, 48 (*K* 6278+): obv. 19-25: *K* 4000*.

³⁷) See Durand, *ARM* 26 I/1 35-36.

³⁸) See R. Labat, *Un calendrier Babylonien des travaux, des signes et des mois*, (séries iqqr îpuš)

same days from the *bārû* acting professionally³⁹). The number of unsuitable days is reduced to five in the Nineveh calendar, *enbu bēl arhi*: the 7th, 14th, 19th, 21st, and 28th⁴⁰). When checking the nearly one hundred datings preserved in the Neo-Assyrian queries and extispicy reports, it is clear that the days, 7, 14, 19, 21, and 28 were avoided as well as the days around the disappearance of the moon, i.e. the 29th, the 30th, and the 1st⁴¹).

From the far fewer datings (26) of the Old Babylonian and Kassite reports one can observe that the days, 1, 19, 21, 28, and 30 were not avoided⁴²). Thus there is a sure indication of a move towards a more regularized timing for performing extispicies.

The first millennium material informs us that one apparently could anger the divine by overzealousness, cf. the *bārû* ritual, Zimmern, *BBR* 11: iii 18-19: *šumma bārû ana bīri kajānu sadir mūt arni imāt*, "if the diviner is in the habit of continuously being engaged in extispicy: he will die the death of wrongdoing". Another interesting reference is found in *CT* 51, no. 147: obv. 39': *šumma ana ilišu dīna sadir 'šipti'/'sibšat' ili*, "if he keeps going to his god for a verdict: 'punishment'/'anger' of the god"⁴³).

For the first time in the Neo-Assyrian period one finds references to some months being more favourable than others for taking extispicies. Zimmern, *BBR* 1-

(Paris 1965) 144-146. One passage is *KAR* 178: r. i 65-70: [UD.1].<KÁM> UD.7.<KÁM> UD.9 <KÁM> UD.14.<KÁM>] UD.19.<KÁM> [UD.2]1.<KÁM> UD.28.KÁM [UD.29.KÁM U]D.30.<KÁM> UD.HUL.GÁL [an]-nu-ti DUMU LÚ.HAL DUG₄.G[A] NU GAR ana DÙ ĀŠ NU na-tu UD.MEŠ ŠE.GA.MEŠ AL.TIL, "[the first day], the 7th day, [the 9th] day, [the 14th day], the 19th day, [the 2]1st [day], the 28th day, [the 29th day], the 30th day, [these (are) the evil days (when) the diviner must not give a prognosis, they (the days) are not suitable for carrying out a project, 'the Favourable Days', completed"]".

³⁹) *KAR* 151: r. 53-56: [UD.2.KÁM] UD.3.KÁM UD.5.KÁM UD.6.KÁM UD.8.KÁM UD.10.KÁM UD.11.KÁM UD.12.KÁM UD.15.KÁM UD.16.KÁM [UD.20]. KÁM [UD 2]2.KÁM UD.23.KÁM UD.24.KÁM UD.26.KÁM UD.29.KÁM ki-i '30 ina 'utu è-e-'em' [la]-a te-ep-pu-uš UD.[1].KÁM 1 UDU.NITA' it-ti rik-si DÙ-uš [...] 'x' 15 UD.MEŠ ša HAL-ti ša ITU-us-su, "[the second], third, 5th, 6th, 8th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 15th, 16th, [20]th [2]2nd, 23rd, 24th, 26th; you should 'not' do (extispicy) on the 29th day when Šin departs from Šamaš, you should 'do' one ram with offerings per day [...], 15 days (suitable) for divination each month". It can be deduced that the same days, and a few more, are unsuitable for taking extispicies as in the text quoted in n. 38.

⁴⁰) See B. Landsberger, *Der kultische Kalender der Babylonier und Assyrer*, *LSS* 6 (Leipzig 1915), 119.

⁴¹) A dating to the second day of the month is found in Starr, *SAA* 4 (Helsinki 1990) no. 157; the 3rd day: nos. 43, 45, 151; the 4th day: nos. 48, 89, 90, 280, 303, 309, 318, 335; the 5th: none; the 6th: nos. 49, 59, 74, 139; the 8th: nos. 50, 65, 152, 281, 334, 336; the 9th: no. 319; the 10th: nos. 3, 8, 14, 28, 51, 230, 304, 324; the 11th: nos. 4, 5, 285, 300, 326, 327; the 12th: none; the 13th: nos. 155, 229, 293; the 15th: no. 282; the 16th: nos. 13, 114, 212, 283, 286; the 17th: nos. 57, 110, 273, 279; the 18th: no. 156; the 20th: no. 284; the 22nd: nos. 23, 76, 185, 195, 210, 228, 301; the 23rd: nos. 262, 305; the 24: nos. 137, 331, 332; the 25th: no. 35; the 26th: nos. 16, 77, 317; the 27th: nos. 94, 279, 296.

⁴²) The dating, first of *ajaru*, is found in Kraus, *JCS* 37 (1985) 146 no. 16 and the first of *simānu* in 134 no. 3; the 19th [...] in Ungnad, *Babyloniaca* 3 (1909) pl. 9; the 21st of *addaru* in Ungnad, *Babyloniaca* 2 (1908) pl. 6; the 28th day in *YOS* 10, 8: r. 37; the 28th of *šabātu* in Kraus, *JCS* 37, 147 no. 17; the 30th of *simānu* in Goetze, *JCS* 11 (1957) 93 no. 4.

⁴³) The text is published by E. Reiner in "A Manner of Speaking", *Zikir šumim*, *Kraus Homage Volume* (Leiden 1982) 282-289.

20: 27 refers to *ajaru*, *simānu* and *tašritu*, i.e. the 2nd, 3rd, and 7th month. In the Neo-Assyrian reports one finds the highest number of datings (15) to *ajaru*, but otherwise extispicies were performed all year round as one would expect⁴⁴).

Another apparent novelty attested to the Nineveh material is the compendium, CT 30, 12 (K 1813) with the duplicate CT 28, 44 (K 717). This text contains 12 protases in which the very negative sign of a missing gall bladder is combined with each of the 12 months⁴⁵). It can be deduced that the hottest months, *du'ūzu*, *abu*, and *ulūlu* are the most unfavourable ones, whereas *addaru*, *nisannu*, and *ajaru* are the most favourable ones⁴⁶).

A certain sophistication was introduced into the calculation of the *adannu* which is the term used for the period "covered" by the prognosis. To my knowledge, this term does not occur in the Old Babylonian omen literature, although in the Mari material there are references to omens being taken for a given period⁴⁷).

The Assur text, KAR 452, and texts from Nineveh, CT 31, 2 (K 12390) and CT 31, 16, 18 (K 4061) link appearances of either a Split (*pitru*) or a Hole (*šīlu*) on the caudate lobe with the calculation of the *adannu*⁴⁸).

I would suggest that the meaning of the following passage is that the unfavourable feature of a Hole of the right Plain (*šēru*) of the Finger (*ubānu*) reduces the length of the *adannu*, so if the diviner takes omens for two months, the *adannu* will only be 20 days. CT 31, 16: obv. 3'-5':

3': BE SUHUŠ EDIN 15 ŠU.SI U ŠUB-di 10 A.RÁ '3 30' [30 *u₄-mī*]

4': ina GIŠ.TUKUL ŠUB-ti ERIN₂-ni AN-'ū' [ŠUR-nun]

5': *šum-ma a-na ITU.2.KĀM DÜ-uš SAG a-dan-ni-ka 20 20 u₄-m[i(...)]*

"if a Hole is situated (on) the base of the right Plain of the Finger: ten times 'three (is) thirty' [thirty days],

in warfare: fall of the army, rain [will fall],

if you do (a divination) for two months: (from) the beginning of your *adannu* twenty, twenty day[s(...)]".

⁴⁴) Datings to *ajaru* are found in Starr, SAA 4 nos. 3, 5, 43, 44, 45, 49, 50, 51, 57, 74, 94, 142, 288, 317, 335.

⁴⁵) In K 11142* a missing *ubānu* is combined with each of the 12 months.

⁴⁶) The apodosis relating to *du'ūzu* is: CT 28, 44: obv. 4: DINGIR LÚ *ir-ba* APIN-eš *ana qī-bit* ^dDumu-zi, "the god will request a gift from the man, on the command of Dumuzi"; obv. 5 (for *abu*): ZĀH *bu-ši šā* LÚ GIG *Ti-ut*, "loss of property belonging to the man, the patient will recover"; obv. 6 (for *ulūlu*): *lu-ūp-nu ina KUR GAR-ma É NA TUR-ir*, "There will be poverty in the country and the man's estate will be diminished"; r. 12 (for *addaru*): NA.BI *UG₅-ma É-su BIR-ah*, "that man will die and his estate will be squandered", obv. 1 (for *nisannu*): [NA *ina ni*]-*qī-šu lu-u DUMU-šu lu-u DUMU* 'SAL-šū' [UG₅], "[the man during his sacrifice, either his son or his daughter will die]"; obv. 2 (for *ajaru*): EN *SISKUR₅ UG₅*, "the owner of the sacrifice will die".

⁴⁷) See Durand, ARM 26 I/1 57-59.

⁴⁸) CT 31, 16, 18 is treated in E. Weidner, "Zahlenspielerien in akkadischen Leberschautexten", OLZ 20 (1917) 258-266.

The Animal used for the extispicy

According to the Old Babylonian textual material, a lamb (*puhādu*) or a ram (*imneru*) could be sacrificed for a divination⁴⁹). In the Neo-Assyrian texts one only finds the writing UDU.(NITA₂) perhaps reflecting a practice in the later period of using the fully grown animal for the extispicy and reserving the lambs for food offerings and for sacrifices of atonement. The “pure lambs”, described in idyllic terms in the *ikribus*, Zimmern, *BBR* nos. 100-101, are the sacrifices of innocence to atone for everything which might have gone wrong in a previously performed extispicy which had produced an unfavorable result⁵⁰). Incidentally, in *ajaru*, the favoured month for taking extispicies, there would have been a fresh stock of one-year-old and just fully grown rams.

Anatomical parts observed

The general trend in the Neo-Assyrian period, in comparison with earlier times, is to concentrate on fewer organs and anatomical parts. This impression is based on the evidence of extispicy reports and serialized compendia⁵¹). However, compendia have been recovered in Nineveh which deal with parts of the sheep's anatomy which were not examined according to current practice. These compendia represented a tradition which could not be dismissed altogether. One example is K 4112*, a copy of an Old Babylonian original, which contains *kukkudru* (abomasum) omens⁵²).

While the heart quite clearly was examined in the Old Babylonian period, not one single *libbu* omen has come to light in texts from the first millennium⁵³). Often, a report from this period concludes: “the *libbu* of the ram was normal”. *Libbu*, in this context, I would translate, “the inside”, and suggest that the term refers to the thoracic and abdominal cavities.

An innovation, according to the Kassite and Neo-Assyrian reports, appears to be the inspection of the *elītu* and the *šaplītu*, “the upper”/“lower part”. Nineveh commentaries identify *elītu* with *šubat imitti*, “the seat to the right”, which again is

⁴⁹) The writing, SILA₄, occurs f. ex. in Ungnad, *Babyloniaca* 2 (1908) pl. 6: obv. 1, 11; 3 (1909) pl. 9 obv. 1; Goetze, *JCS* 11 (1957) 92 no. 6: obv. 1; 91 no. 8: obv. 1; *TCL* 17 no. 27: obv. 10. SILA₄.NITA₂ occurs in Frank, *Strassburger Keilschrifttexte* (1928) no. 5 obv. 1: UDU is found in Goetze, *JCS* 11 (1957) 91 no. 7: obv. 1; Nougayrol, *JCS* 21 (1967) 220 (“B”): obv. 1, (“C”): obv. 1; UDU.NITA₂ is found in Starr, *Finkelstein Memorial Volume* (1977) 207 obv. 1. *Imnerum* is written syllabically in *CT* 4, 34b: obv. 1. See also, Durand, *ARM* 26 I/1 36-37.

⁵⁰) In no. 100 obv. 8-9, there is mention of “unfavourable (or) confused omens”.

⁵¹) See Jeyes, *Extispicy* (1989) 11.

⁵²) For the term *kukkudru*, see Starr, *Rituals* (1983) 92. In Boissier, *DA* (1896) 97-99 there are small collections of *kukkudru*, *isru*, *ṭapaššu*, and *šubtu* omens. Only the term *isru* occurs in the Neo-Assyrian reports.

⁵³) See Jeyes, *Extispicy* (1989) 77-79.

identified with *irtu*, "chest"⁵⁴). *Šubat imitti/šumēli* are terms which occur in the Old Babylonian reports and, at a guess, I would identify "the upper / lower part" with "the seat to the right/left" and with the serous membranes which cover the thoracic and abdominal cavities, i.e. the pleura and the peritoneum. If this identification should happen to be correct so that accordingly "right"/"left" become "upper"/"lower", perhaps it reflects a change in the way in which the diviner handled the carcass of the sacrificed animal.

The finger measurement

It is a well known principle, established in the Old Babylonian period, that the normal length of a normally occurring groove on the visceral surface of the liver was assessed to be three fingerwidths⁵⁵). What was in excess of this measurement was interpreted as favourable. However, when the diviners used their fingers as measuring units, the problem would arise that one man with a small hand would deliver a good omen result whereas another with a big hand would deliver a bad result. Shortness, in contrast to length, was namely interpreted as unfavourable⁵⁶). My interpretation of the following expression, "in the big finger, (in) the finger of the *bārû*, (in) the finger(measurement) of the *aslu* unit" (see below p. 38), is that we have here an attempt to conform the diviner's finger to the *aslu* standard unit. In Boissier, *DA* 12: i 27-28 the parallel expression is: ... *ina šu.SI as-li šu.SI GAL-ti šu.SI TUR-ti šu.SI LÚ.HAL 3 šu.SI.TA.ÀM man-da*, "in the finger (measurement) of the *aslu* unit, (in) the big finger, (in) the small finger, (in) the finger of the *bārû*, they (the normally occurring grooves) are measured to three fingerwidths". One unpublished text, K 3690 + K 3722, appears to comment on this more accurate method of measuring. To me, the full meaning of the text has remained elusive, but I assume that the following equations are made:

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| r. 3': ... <i>šu.SI GAL-tú</i> | = <i>1 šu.SI as-li [...]</i> |
| r. 5': ... <i>šu.SI 3-tu₄ MURUB₄-tu₄</i> | = <i>1 šu.SI as-li SAG.UŠ</i> |
| r. 6': <i>šu.SI 4-tu₄ šá Á TUR-ti</i> | = <i>1 šu.SI LÚ.HAL</i> |
| r. 7': ... <i>šu.SI 5-tu₄</i> | = <i>1 šu.SI TUR-ti</i> |

"... the big finger ... (is) the finger(measurement) of the *aslu* unit [...]"

... the third finger, the middle one ... (is) the finger(measurement) of the regular *aslu* unit,

⁵⁴) *Elītu* (NU.UM.ME) or (AN-tu₄) is equated with *šubat imitti* (DAG 15) in Boissier, *DA* 11: i 19, quoted by the *CAD* E 99. *Šubat imitti* is equated with *irtu* in K 3667 + K 1808: iii 16', quoted in Starr, *Rituals* (1983) 83. *Šubtu* which also is mentioned in f. ex. *YOS* 10, 49: 15-20, should not be confused with the *šubtu* of the zone of the *padānu*, see Jeyes, *Extispicy* (1989) 57-58.

⁵⁵) See Jeyes, *Extispicy* (1989) 14.

⁵⁶) One example is *YOS* 10, 31: vi 36-38: *šum-ma mar-tu[m] ik-ta-ri le-me-in a-we-lim*, "If the gall bladder has shortened: misery for the man".

... the fourth finger of the small side ... (is) the diviner's finger,
 ... the fifth finger ... (is) the small finger"

My interpretation of these quotations is that the diviner may use his index finger, middle finger, ring-finger, or little finger in any combination, but his finger must be equal to the regular *aslu* unit. It appears that the average middle finger comes closest to this standard unit.

Right and left

It is a well established principle that the right side is "my side" and the left side belongs to the enemy, but what exactly is right and left?

We can trace a development by which the surfaces of the liver and the lung were divided into more and more, smaller and smaller squares designated "right" or "left". CT 31, 1-5 (K 70+) is a so-called "orientation tablet" which labels each subsection as "right" or "left". One line of this somewhat tedious, text goes: CT 31, 1: ii 10': SAG EDIN GÙB ŠU.SI GÙB MURUB₄ EDIN GÙB ŠU.SI ZAG SUHUŠ EDIN GÙB ŠU.SI [GÙB], "the head of the left Plain of the finger (is) "left", the middle of the left Plain of the Finger (is) "right", the base of the left Plain of the Finger is ["left"]. "Orientation tablets" are not attested before Neo-Assyrian Nineveh.

From the Neo-Babylonian period we have the liver model, BM 50494, which was published by Nougayrol in RA 62 (1968) 31-50. This model illustrates the same intensive dividing up of the liver.

This refinement of definition was a bit selfdefeating. The more subsections there were, the risk would increase of the ambiguity of a marking falling directly on a borderline or right in the middle of a zone. In theory the rules of interpretation were simple; the practicality of applying these rules created ever increasing difficulties.

Mukallimtu

Mukallimtu is the name for a series of learned commentaries and I would translate it, "Demonstration". Each of the ten extispicy (*bārûtu*) series from Nineveh has a *mukallimtu*. The unpublished one to the *šumma isru* series (K 3978+) is almost complete and quite a number of duplicates, one Babylonian (K 6075*) have come to light. Older versions are not attested to this type of text.

With various traditions compiled in one place, Nineveh, the scribes would inevitably be confronted with the problem that the same condition of the entrails would be described in different ways. I believe that one objective of the *mukallimtu* tablets was to collect and number the various descriptive expressions and to take a decision about which one should be adopted. One passage from the *mukallimtu* to the *šumma manzāzu* series should serve as an example: Boissier, DA 17 iv 35-38:

35: BE NA *kab-su* KAL BAL-ut ú-šal-lam-šú

36: BE *ši-bu-šú* NA *ina sip-pi* 150 ME.NI GAR-kin

37: BE NA *ka-bi-is* KAL GAR *ši-bu-šú*

38: BE NA *ina sip-pí* 150 ME.NI GAR-*ma* BAL-ut

"If the Presence is obliterated (and) the Strength is turned 90°: it will benefit him (to express it like this),

If (in) its old version, the Presence is placed in the left Doorjamb of the Palace Gate,

If the Presence is obliterated (and) the Strength is there, (in) its old version,

If the Presence is placed in the left Doorjamb of the Palace Gate and it is turned 90°".

The condition which I believe these four lines describe is that of the normally occurring groove, the *manzāzu*, missing and the other groove, the *danānu* being observed in its normal position but turned 90 degrees from usually running parallel to the *bāb ekalli* to being drawn at a right angle to the umbilical fissure.

Some passages from the *mukallimtu* texts may list up to ten different versions of description⁵⁷). Inserted into the text one often finds explanations of words, e.g. K 3978 + : i 38: *ta-ra-ku la-pa-tu*, "to be dark (equals) to damage". Another example is: CT 20, 27: ii 9: KAR *e-ke-mu e-tè-ru ka-ba-su*, "(the sign) KAR (means) to hide (which equals) to take away (or) to obliterate". The idea behind these explanations is not to claim that words of a different meaning are synonymous, but to list descriptive words which in the context of an extispicy would warrant the same interpretation. Whether a certain feature is "hidden", "taken away", or "obliterated", the evaluation would be the same.

In *mukallimtu* one finds expressions like, "you should say" (*taqabbī*), "as they used to say" (*kīma iqbū*), or "which they used to say" (*ša iqbū*)⁵⁸). The following warning is found in Boissier, DA 12: i 25: *ana LÚ NA.ME ul iq-qab-bi*, "it should not be said to anyone".

Multābiltu

The learned series, *Multābiltu*, "Interpretation", comprised, according to the catalogue tablet CT 20, 1, 17 tablets. The first tablet of this series lists the rules of association. The very first line is often quoted: CT 20, 39: obv. 1: *DIŠ a-rik-tu₄ ka-šit-tu₄ BE NA GÍD.DA-ma GÍR [KUR]-ud NUN ina KASKAL DU-ku KUR-ád*, "if length: success (example:) if the Presence is long and reaches the Path: the prince will succeed with the campaign on which he is going". This type of apodosis, consisting of one word plus an elaboration is not new, cf. this Old Babylonian example: Scheil RA 27 (1930) 142: obv. 2: *ki-ši-i[t]-tum a-al la-wi-at a-na ŠA-šu te-e-ru-ub*, "conquest, you will enter the city which you are besieging".

⁵⁷) F. ex. CT 31, 44 + K 3324* + K 3926*: i 37: BE *10-u*, "if, its 10th (description)".

⁵⁸) See Y. Elman, "Authoritative Oral Tradition in the Neo-Assyrian Scribal Circles", *JANES* 7 (1975) 19-32. S.J. Lieberman, *Moran Homage Volume* (Atlanta 1990) 307-308.

One gets the impression from omen compendia of all periods that the diviner, having memorized these rules of interpretation, was programmed to produce a prognosis which consisted of one word and possibly, but not necessarily, an explanation.

Tablets two and three of *Multābiltu* deal with the ambiguous signs which turn (*nukkuru*) the final omen result⁵⁹). One of these “jokers” is the *pitrustu* which is a negativity which occurs simultaneously on a right and left side. If the negative sign appears right in the centre of a zone, such as the groove of the *manzāzu* itself, it is also a *pitrustu*. The other “joker” is the *niphu* which is, amongst other things, associated with the number three. If f. ex. there are three Splits on a right side, it is a *niphu*⁶⁰).

These two ambiguous signs are attested in the Old Babylonian period and the earliest text which provides a compact study of “difficult signs” is VAT 13798 which dates to Tiglatpileser I⁶¹). In the “Sammeltext”, KAR 423, there is a section, from r. i 78 to the end of the text, which methodically lists the features which are difficult to interpret. It is clear that it is not all occurrences of a negativity on both a right and a left side and not all triples which should be regarded as *pitrustus* and *niphus* respectively, and one purpose of tablets two and three of *Multābiltu* might have been to settle which formations exactly should be given “joker” status.

These same tablets display a mindboggling complexity by demonstrating how one and up to seven *niphus* or *pitrustus* would, in their different way, affect the final omen result which could be described as follows: “all good”, “many good and few bad”, “mixed”, “many bad and few good”, “all bad”. Furthermore, we have the implication of such an ambiguous sign on the first, check-up, and third extispicy. Passages from the first three tablets of *Multābiltu* show that indeed the ancient scribes expressed themselves in other ways than by the list. But, on the whole, it was obviously not considered to be either necessary or desirable to detach abstract thought from the grammatical structure of the *šumma* sentence. Sometimes, instead of a “a *niphu*”, one finds “ten *tīrānu*”. The count ten of the half turns of the colon spiral was a *niphu*⁶²). Instead of “unfavourable”, an unfavourable apodosis is written⁶³). This preference for the concrete has perhaps to the modern scholar disguised an approach which was both methodical and logical.

⁵⁹) See f. ex. K 6450* (is joined to CT 31, 48-49) obv. 1: [BE MU.MEŠ] šā ina ba-ru-ti nu-uk-ku-ru-ma [...], “if the omens which turn round (the omen result) in *bārūtu* and [...]”. A variant writing is in CT 30. 43 r. 7: BE-ma MU.MEŠ šā ina ba-ru-ti KÚR.MEŠ-m[a ...].

⁶⁰) See U. Jeyes, “The Act of Extispicy in Ancient Mesopotamia: An Outline”, *Assyriological Miscellanies* 1 (Copenhagen 1980) 26-27.

⁶¹) See E. Weidner, “Die Bibliothek Tiglatpilesers I”, AfO 16 (1952-53) Tafel XIII and 210.

⁶²) Compare KAR 423: r. ii 54: BE ŠA.NIGION 10; (one entry in a list of difficult signs); Boissier, DA 231: r. 32: BE ditto (= HAR.BAD DÙ)-ma ina SILIM-ti ŠA.NIGIN 10, “if you take an omen and in a good (result) there are ten *tīrānu*”.

⁶³) See below, CT 20, 44: i 49.

In the following passage from the second tablet of *Multābiltu*, the whole interpretative system has been put in a nutshell: CT 20, 44: i 48-61:

- 48: GIŠ.TUKUL *a-[ri]-du u ma-hi-ir-šú ana IGI GIŠ.TUKUL e-pé-'ri'* [...]
 49: 'TĒŠ'-ti LÚ *ina TI-šú LUGAL TÙM ana IDIM u MAŠ.EN.KAK a-šar 'SIG₅'* [...]
 50: NU KUR.MEŠ *ina KI.DAL.BA.AN.NA ina É HA.LA 15 ma-la ba-šu-'ú'*
 51: GIŠ.TUKUL GÌR U DU₈ KAM-tu₄ BAR-tu₄ *kak-su-ú KAR-tu₄ ni-ip-'hu'*
 52: MURUB₄.MEŠ *sar-ra-a-tu₄ bi-re-e-tu₄ ni-ip-ha-a-ti NA GÌR*
 53: KA.DÙG.GA KAL ME.NI SILIM ZÉ SÌG-iš IGI ERIN₂ KÚR ŠUB AŠ.TE ŠŪ.SI *ni-ru*
 54: *u MÁŠ 3 ŠU.SI.TA.ÀM GIŠ.HUR.MEŠ IGI TÙN man-da ina ŠU.SI GAL-ti*
 55: ŠU.SI LÚ.HAL ŠU.SI *as-li GIŠ.TUKUL 7-ti 15-ti*
 56: DU₈ *3-ti ana IZI.GAR-ma ta-nam-bi 1 ŠU.SI GÌR 1/2 ŠU.SI DU₈*
 57) 2 ŠU.SI *šit-qu 3 ŠU.SI šit-hu KI NÍG.GIG ú-lap-pa-tu₄*
 58) *si-hi-ir-ti BÀ 1 KÙŠ 6 ŠU.SI SAG.KI BÀ IGI zu-ú-ri BÀ 14 ŠU.SI*
 59) *bi-rit 15 ia-um-ma 150 šá KÚR ana SILIM LUGAL ana GIŠ.TUKUL ana KASKAL*
 60) *ana ša-bat URU ana SILIM GIG ana ŠUR-an AN-e ana DÙ-eš ÁŠ*
 61) *u mim-ma ma-'da-a-ti HAR.BAD DÙ-ma*

Translation:

- 48: A vertical Weapon and its equivalent(?) is [...] to the front of a Weapon of dust,
 49: the king will take away the dignity of the man in his (the man's) lifetime, for the important man and the commoner: a place of good [...]
 50: they will not achieve. In the central area, in the House of Division to the right, as many as there are:
 51: the Weapon, the Foot, the Hole, the Split, the Request, the Cross, the *kaksû*, the *nēkemtu*, the *niphu*,
 52: the middle areas (are) lies, the central areas (are) confusion. The Presence, the Path,
 53: the Good Word, the Strength, the Palace Gate, the Well-being, the Defeat of the Enemy's Army, the Throne Base, the Finger, the Yoke,
 54: and the Increase: three finger(widths) is the measure of the grooves ("Drawings") on the liver ("Pouch"), in the big finger,
 55: (in) the finger of the diviner, (in) the finger(measurement) of the *aslu* unit. Seven Weapons to the right
 56: (and) three Splits you should declare a *niphu*. A Foot is one Finger, a Split is half a Finger.
 57: A cut of two Fingers (and) a damaged area of three Fingers will defile the consecrated place.
 58: The circumference of the liver (is) one Cubit and six Fingers. The front of the liver on(?) the body(?) of the liver is 14 Fingers.

- 59: (What is to) the right of the central area is mine, (what is to) the left belongs to the enemy. For the welfare of the king, for the armed forces, for the campaign,
 60: for taking a city, for the welfare of the patient, for rainfall, for carrying out a project
 61: and for many other thing (when) you take an omen:

Commentary:

- 48: Normally a Weapon points towards some specific point on the liver. A vertical (unfocussed) Weapon is a difficult sign to interpret and requires special attention. The expression, *kakku āridu*, has so far only appeared in the first millennium texts, for references, see the *CAD* under *āridu*. Possibly, the prominence given to the "vertical Weapon" in this text is because we are here dealing with a Neo-Assyrian innovation to the interpretative apparatus.
- 49: A second apodosis, applying to other populations groups, is not new, see U. Jeyes, *Extispicy* (1989) 45, 48.
- 50: The *birītu*, "central" or "median" line, I assume, is the line which divides a zone of the liver in a right and a left half. The *birītu* will go through the normally occurring groove itself. The *bīl zitti* is a rarely occurring expression which first appears in the Mari material, see Durand, *ARM* 26 I/1 (1988) no. 164: obv. 4'. The "House of Division" is unidentified. Perhaps it is a "no-man's land" between some of the zones.
- 51: The *kakku*, *šēpu*, *šīlu*, *pitru*, *erištu*, *išpalurtu*, *kaksû*, and *nēkemtu* are the names for the most frequently occurring fortuitous marks which might be found on the entrails. *Niphu*, mentioned in this context, is perhaps not to be understood as the ambiguous sign of the same name, but as a fortuitous mark, "Inflated Part".
- 52: The *qabliātu*, "the middles", are the lines which cross the *birētu* at a right angle.
- 53-54: The *manzāzu*, *padānu*, *pū īābu*, *danānu*, *šulmu*, *mihiš pān ummān nakri* and *nīdi kussē* are the names for the normally occurring grooves ("drawings") on the liver. For the finger measurement, see p. 34-35
- 55-56: The Seven Weapons and three Splits are two examples of formations which should be regarded as *niphus*.
- 57: The "cut" and "damaged area", I guess, are the ones which have been caused by the clumsy diviner, see p. 25.
- 58: The second half of this line is uncertain. *Zu'ru*, I understand as the Neo-Assyrian form for *zumru*. The measurement of 14 "fingers" on the "body" of the liver is otherwise unattested and it is not known how it was obtained. One *ammatu* is 30 *ubānu*, i.e. ca. 50 cm. according to the *CAD*, see under *ammatu*.
- 59-61: A list of key-words and expressions found in questions put to the divine when an extispicy was performed.

A parallel text to this extract from *Multābiltu*, tablet two, is Boissier, *DA* 12:i 27-34. In the same text 14: ii 10 it says: *šá ki-iš-ri* GABA.RI BAL.TIL⁶¹, "from section(s), copy (copies) from Assur". Perhaps we have here a case of Assyrian diviners asserting their competence and authority over their Babylonian colleagues. Obviously, one purpose of *Multābiltu* was to direct the diviner towards delivering a correct omen result, favourable or not, but this is not necessarily the only purpose. Tablet ten has as its first line: *CT* 20 1:r. 25: ERIN₂ KÚR *ana* KUR.MU *ug-tip-pi-ša* HAR.BAD DÙ-*ma* šá HAR.BAD GÍR GAR, "(if) you perform an extispicy when the enemy's army is massed against my country and, of (this) extispicy, the Path is there". The tablet has survived in an incomplete state and has been published in *CT* 20, 49. Many apoduses in this text are unique and strongly suggest a connection with recent political events of Assurbanipal's reign⁶⁴). Tablets 14-16 of *Multābiltu* contain *šumma amūtu* omens, something hitherto unattested in extispicy compendia. The livers described as a whole in these tablets are of extraordinary appearances and thus hardly susceptible to normal rules of interpretation⁶⁵). Tablets 10, 14-16, and perhaps other tablets of this series, I assume, had a special commemorative purpose.

Extispicy, a secret science

The changes which the extispicy texts underwent over the centuries are obvious. New terms for some, but not all features, in the interpretative apparatus replaced old ones and the writing became increasingly ideographic. In the Old Babylonian texts, readable by the literate layman, the underlying rules of interpretation would not easily have been detected by him and neither would they have been by the modern scholar if these texts were the only ones available. The first millennium texts are much more forthcoming in revealing the underlying principles of this science, but they would not have been readable by the literate non-professional. Some of the learned commentaries do however carry this warning, f. ex. Boissier, *DA* 46: r. 6'-7': SAL.ŠEŠ NAM.UZU₂ *ina* ZU.A ZU.A DINGIR NU ZU.A NU IGI-*mar* NÍG.GIG ^a*Šullat* ù ^a*Ha[niš]*], "the secret of *bārūtu*, into the knowledge of the god, an ignorant person may not see; it is consecrated to *Šullat* and *Haniš* (i.e. *Šamaš* and *Adad*)"⁶⁶).

There are few cases of this secret knowledge falling into the hands of the non-professionals. Šulgi's claim to competence in this science is under dispute⁶⁷).

⁶⁴) See the published version of "Assurbanipal's *bārūtu*", the paper given at the XXXIXe RAI, Heidelberg 1992.

⁶⁵) *CT* 30, 31 (Rm 153) is a fragment of tablet 14. The Seleucid version has survived intact: *TCL* 6 no. 1. *CT* 30, 9-10 is a commentary to tablet 15. Fragments of *šumma amūtu* tablets are: K 10599*, K 11011*, K 11141*, K 14549*, 79-7-8, 58 + *, 81-2-4, 249*.

⁶⁶) A variant is *KAR* 151: r. 67 [*nī*]-*šir-ti* NAM.UZU₂ NU ZU NU IGI NÍG.GIG ^a*Šullat* u [^a*Haniš*].

⁶⁷) Durand, *ARM* 26 I/1 (1988) 25 n. 87.

Assurbanipal does not, to my knowledge, insist that he is able to perform extispicies, like Šulgi, but he does promote himself as somebody who possesses a sound knowledge of the whole theoretical basis of this applied science⁶⁸). To judge from the Mari letters, the rulers there certainly had a working knowledge of the whole process of performing extispicies⁶⁹).

Whereas it is doubtful whether the king could become a *bārû*, in the case of Aqba-Hammu it has been suggested that a *bārû* became king⁷⁰).

Conclusion

The omen results from extispicies were projected towards past, present and future. A run of what we would call "bad luck" could be explained. The cause of a problem like an illness could be pinpointed and a plan for the near future could be sanctioned through this form of divination.

That was based on the belief that the liver of a sacrificed sheep was a map of what constituted human life: the king, the city, the palace, the personal god, the enemy etc. and that the whole interpretative system was a code waiting to be cracked by the expert diviner.

"A firm foundation", a favoured expression in the omen texts, came about by a successfully conducted dialogue between the gods and the individual with the diviner acting as an interpreter. On this basis man could proceed towards happiness, success, and fulfillment, unimpeded by divine anger and will to punish.

The efforts towards a full understanding of this divinely ordained system of communication were directed on two fronts, firstly by eliminating from the ritual setting any human error or shortcoming and, secondly, by increasing the chance for the diviner of passing the exam which every extispicy posed for him.

To meet this intellectual challenge, data were collected in a manner which clearly demonstrates the Mesopotamian talent for order and organization.

As the study material increased, the rules of interpretation were refined and more emphasis was put on exactness and standardization in measuring, description, definition, and interpretation, and in this one observes a move towards a scientific method.

⁶⁸) Most noticeable is the Assurbanipal colophon to the extispicy texts in which the king claims to have been taught by Šamaš and Adad themselves, see H. Hunger, *Babylonische und Assyrische Kolophone*, AOAT 2 (Neukirchen 1968) no. 315 (type "1").

⁶⁹) For the Mari letters which contain details of extispicies, see Durand, *ARM* 26 I 1 (1988) 53.

⁷⁰) S. Dalley, C.B.F. Walker, and J.D. Hawkins, *The Old Babylonian Tablets From Tell al Rimah* (1975) 32-33.